Lilith

the independent Jewish women's magazine

African-American Nannies & Jewish Girls

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Lilith

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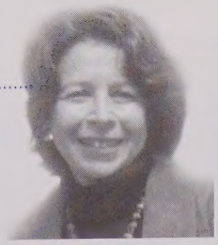
Why is this magazine called Lilith?

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—FROM *THE ALPHABET OF BEN SIRA*, 23A-B

From the Editor



Not all party favors lift your spirits. I was at a benefit dinner for a private school last month, and among the goodies in my take-home bag was a ruler, innocuous enough at first glance. But on the obverse of the strip of plastic were dozens of smaller-than-postage-stamp-sized photos, all of men. I actually stared at these pictures for several seconds, puzzled, when I saw the caption: "Presidents of Our Country." And not a single woman!

Of course I know there has never been a woman president. I wasn't born yesterday. But somehow seeing those little pictures was both shocking and, at the same time, ludicrous. How *stupid*. Only *men* as presidents? Look what we've been missing!

Cynthia Ozick wrote in these pages many years ago about what she termed "The Jewish Half-Genius" She claimed that it was inaccurate to speak of "Jewish genius" when adumbrating the accomplishments of individual Jews, since fully half of the Jews—women—had been left out of the tally.

Turns out size does matter. Beans do count. One important reason is that the percentage of women on a board or committee or governing body will dictate the response any woman in that group gets when she speaks or acts.

"That's an excellent suggestion, Miss Triggs. Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it."

The magic proportion seems to be about 30 percent, according to research on women's achievement. Below that golden mean, women's voices aren't heard—and the few women sitting at those boardroom tables feel themselves powerless. Numbers above 30 percent aren't magic, but they do at least create an environment in which women can approach success.

While as feminists we know that numbers are important, they have been in scarce supply in the Jewish world this season. Ten years ago, the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey revealed that Jewish women are exactly twice as likely to remain single throughout their childbearing years as other white North American women. And that study also told us that (as we'd suspected all along) Jewish women are the best educated women on the continent. Almost two thirds have college degrees, compared with less than twelve percent of other white North American women. An update on these numbers (and on intermarriage rates, income and other useful demographics) was to have been released in November by the United Jewish Communities, umbrella for Jewish federations. Then, a week before the release date, an announcement went out that the company responsible for conducting the $6 million survey had lost some of the data! A long op-ed piece in the New York Times proclaimed that the numbers didn't matter anyway. Jews are too preoccupied with numbers said the writer, a male Jewish academic.

But the numbers do matter very much, especially to women. Just ask the female Jewish engineering student I met recently. The only woman in many of her classes, she was taken seriously—heard and heeded—only when she dressed like one of the guys. Clad in a skirt, she found her questions and answers were almost always ignored by male peers and professors. She (and they) had no role models of women engineers. If 30 out of 100 engineering students were female, dressed however they chose, you bet they'd be harder to ignore. Watch out for those numbers. They do matter. And watch out for pictures of executives in Jewish organizations. Like that plastic ruler, many of them indicate that the corridors of power are stalked only by men.

Of course the Jewish woman engineering student has other things on her mind besides her classes these days. To be a Jew on campus this season is fraught—if not with peril, then at least with great uneasiness. As you know, campuses across the continent have been the scenes of virulent anti-Israel and often anti-Semitic activity. LILITH has reported on how students, faculty, alumnae and others are responding to these situations.

But at the same time, women on campus are trying to sort out their lives in other dimensions too. To help them do so, we've launched an extraordinary project bringing gender-issue programs to college campuses, thanks to a cooperative venture with Hillel made possible with generous support from Edgar M. Bronfman. This project, LILITH on Campus, brings each issue of the magazine to students, along with program suggestions and discussion guides. It's a perfect complement to Lilith's internship program, which has, over the years, welcomed more than 90 students into our office and featured the writing of young women in LILITH's pages.

The LILITH on Campus program guides are tailored to topics covered in the magazine—fertility among young Jews, the resurgence of the JAP stereotype on campus, new ways to celebrate Jewish holidays and personal lifecycle events, and more. (If you'd like to receive a copy of the program and discussion guides for other uses—Rosh Hodesh groups, synagogue sisterhoods, camps, youth groups or reading circles, send us your email address.) The goals of this project are to strengthen current Jewish women's programming, help incubate new programs for and about Jewish women, and be a general resource for Jewish life on campus. Jewish gender-issue programs like these can build bridges to other campus communities, a task that now feels more urgent than ever.

Susan

—SUSAN WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER

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Kol Ishah:
The Voices of Women.

Traditionally, the **voice** of the Jewish woman was **not to be heard** in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, in our own **strong voices**.

Mazal Tov To:

Foreign correspondent **Ruth Gruber**, recipient of the Fritz Redlich Distinguished Alumni Award from the Institute of International Education. Gruber's stellar career spans seven decades. *Haven*, one of her 16 books, a television miniseries in 2001, documents her role in the secret rescue of 1,000 Jewish refugees during the Holocaust.

Toronto Star columnist **Michele Landsberg**, honored by the Canadian government for her contribution to women's lives. Landsberg says she became a feminist when, at 12, the police arrested her for trying to hitch a ride home from a bookstore. When she refused to identify herself, the police found her rabbi, who attributed her errant ways to the fact that Landsberg's mother worked.

In an October column, Landsberg, wonders why Muslim leaders don't speak about state-sanctioned horrors against women—enslavement, burning, and mutilation—that are often inflicted in the name of Islam. The reason, she concludes, whether in Pakistan or Canada, is "a set of deeply ingrained cultural patterns of valuing just about anything—deficit cutting or men's so-called honor—more than women's lives."

Liz Lerman works with company and community dancers at the Skirball Centerin Los Angeles.

Dancer and choreographer **Liz Lerman**, who this year received a MacArthur "genius" grant. Her Maryland-based company, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, holds workshops across the country that offer ordinary people, of all ages and backgrounds, the chance to create and perform dance in their communities.

Rabbi Shirley Idelson, appointed associate dean at the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College in New York. Idelson, chaplain at Vassar College for seven years, edited *Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation* (Rutgers University Press) with Rabbis **Rebecca Alpert** and **Sue Levi Elwell**.

Activist **Susan Elizabeth Pollack**, who received the Jan Karski Freedom Award for Valor and Compassion for her 10 years of work smuggling Jews out of Ethiopia. The award, sponsored by The American Center of Polish Culture & Freedom House, is named for Dr. Jan Karski, the first to give Allied forces an eyewitness account of the mass killing of Jews during World War II.

Jewish Women Go Public about Israel

Jewish women's reactions to the traumas of everyday life in Israel range from unconditional support to outright condemnation of the government's policies.

One entity, a political coalition of 11 major Jewish women's organizations, brought together this year by Orthodox feminist **Blu Greenberg**, includes women across the Jewish spectrum, from American Jewish Congress' Committee for Women's Equality to the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance. One Voice: Jewish Women for Israel is involved in political action. In June, for example, the women organized a telephone chain to members of Congress, thanking members for their support of Israel.

Madeleine Brecher, national vice president of the National Council of Jewish Women, and co-coordinator of One Voice, noted that the coalition includes all the mainstream women's organizations, such as Hadassah and Women's American ORT. "Talk is that we represent one million women," Brecher said.

According to its mission statement, One Voice stands "in solidarity with the State of Israel and its people." Brecher said that there were certain subjects that could not go into the statement because they might offend some members. For example, Brecher said, the issue of the settlements never came up. "We work via consensus," said Brecher.

But other Jewish women see Israel's occupation of West Bank land as a major issue. For example, The Jerusalem Post reported in October that when a group of New Jersey women on a "solidarity mission" met with Labor Party Knesset member **Yael Dayan**, Dayan snapped back, "Solidarity with what?" She scolded them for supporting policies of

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Ariel Sharon's government. Meanwhile the pacifist group Women in Black, which was formed in 1988 by a group of women in Israel to protest the occupation, now with branches all over the world, including Yugoslavia, has been organizing weekly vigils in New York for the past year.

"Ariel Sharon has taken the violence of occupation to depths we could not even imagine a year ago," said **Naomi Braine**, a member of Women in Black. "We're challenging hard the assumption that it is the Jews who are the victims here."

"Unfortunately, many of the Jewish women publicly maligning Israel are misinformed about the historical and legal realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," said **Ricki Hollander**, a senior research analyst at the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), which monitors anti-Israel bias in the media.

Hollander was speaking in her own behalf, not for CAMERA. "It is disturbing that some people use their Jewishness to lend credibility to their attacks on Israel." Women in Black, which was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2000, represents views that many consider far left of center.

—A.S.A.

Israeli & Palestinian Parents Grieve Together

A combination of profoundly sobering and oxymoronically encouraging remarks came directly from their heavy hearts: **Amiram Goldin**, project manager for a joint Arab-Israeli industrial park in the Galilee lost his 20-year-old son in a suicide bus bombing in August 2002. Dr. **Rahib Essawi**, a Palestinian academic who teaches at Al Quds University (Jerusalem) lost her mother, a brother, and 17-year-old nephew in the conflict. **Yitzhak Frankenthal** is an Orthodox Jew whose 19-year old son, an Israeli soldier, was killed by Hamas militants in 1995. They shared their personal stories at a Manhattan synagogue in October, as part of the Bereaved Parents Circle (www.theparentscircle.com), a group of Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost children or other relatives in the Middle East conflict, yet are working together to keep communication open between the two sides. Their goal is to give peace a chance.

Frankenthal, a father of four, founded the group in 1995 a year after he lost his soldier son. With help from a student, he contacted similarly bereaved people. Their group now consists of 200 Jewish families and 190 Palestinian families. The circle, sadly, has grown exponentially in the last two years, as has the pool of spilled blood.

Among their activities are workshops and seminars for the bereaved families and a billboard and media advertising campaign, "Shalom Salaam Hello," inviting the general public to make a phone call to speak to someone from "the other side." Seventy-five thousand phone calls came in, resulting in 22,000 actual phone conversations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Terror means, said Frankenthal at the October meeting, not only that you could be blown apart on a bus, or in a café or at a bar mitzvah party, but also that you live your daily life blockaded from access to health care, to school, or to visiting your family.

During the program one man in the audience hollered at the speakers and the crowd, "Haven't any of you read the Palestinian Charter? You are all a bunch of idiots!" He then stomped out.

"You know, we could be proved wrong, it could be that with a two-state solution there would not be an end to war. But we have never given it a chance, and we have to give it that chance," said Frankenthal, humbly and patiently.

The speaking tour to 15 U.S. cities by the Bereaved Parents Circle was organized by the recently formed Brit Zedek Veshalom (www.btvshalom.org), Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, a membership organization of American Jews who describe themselves as "deeply committed to Israel's well-being and opposed to its decades-long occupation of land acquired following the 1967 war."

—NAOMI DANIS

kol ishah

Woman of power

In its annual international list of the 50 most powerful women in business, Fortune Magazine ranked **Galia Maor** number 34. She is president and CEO of Bank Leumi, the second-largest bank in Israel. Maor, 59, the daughter of Polish olim, is one of the few women in Israel who hold prominent positions in business or government.

Gender equality prize for an Orthodox rabbi

In Israel, **Moshe Levi**, 26, received first prize in an essay contest on gender equality sponsored by, among others, the women's organization Na'amat Israel. In his essay, Levi advocates more flexibility in interpreting *halacha*, saying Jewish law should be influenced by real life to improve women's status.

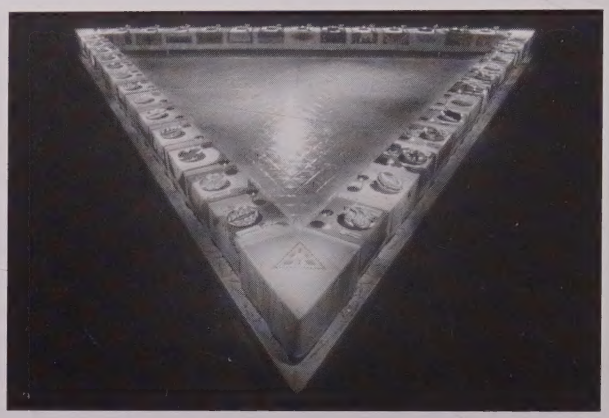
HOW MUSEUMS INVENT US

You're Invited for Dinner

Feminist artist **Judy Chicago**'s almost-kitch "Dinner Party" celebrates women throughout history with a huge, triangular banquet arrangement. Thirty-nine highly original place settings represent influential women we often don't know about, ranging from the primordial earth goddess to **Georgia O'Keeffe** and including the biblical **Judith**, with her placemat in Hebrew. The ceramic plates are cunningly cast to replicate vulvas. Chicago's work is now on view at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, where it will be permanently housed in 2004, thanks to a grant from the **Elizabeth A. Sackler** Foundation.

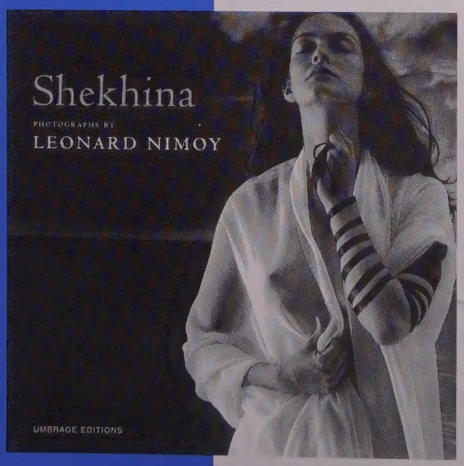
— ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

"Judy Chicago: The Dinner Party." Brooklyn Museum of Art, 718-638-5000, through Feb. 9. Through January 10, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, in Washington DC, is also hosting a retrospective of Chicago's work, in honor of the 40th anniversary of The Dinner Party.



Celebrating the Female Spirit

"One of the most important dimensions of contemporary Jewish spirituality and identity is based on the advancement of feminism," says **Jean Bloch Rosensaft**, director of New York's Hebrew Union College museum. In keeping with this philosophy, the museum this winter is offering an enticing assortment of exhibits. Not all the artists are women, but all in some fashion celebrate the female spirit.



- "Leonard Nimoy: Shekhina" is a selection of 19 photographs from the new book by the actor known best as the Star Trek's Dr. Spock, **Leonard Nimoy**. Nimoy's book, which he says explores feminine spirituality—the word *shekhinah* stands for the female aspect of God—consists of black-and-white photographs of women, some wearing *tfillin* or draped in *tallitot*. That many of the models are otherwise nude has caused an uproar in some Jewish circles. The HUC exhibit chose, says Rosensaft, "the most spiritual, evocative, and most mysterious material" from Nimoy's book—but no shots with full frontal nudity.

- "Archetype/Anonymous" features unorthodox representations of biblical women. Curator **Laura Kruger** writes: "Because of the androcentric nature of biblical record, most women in the Bible are unnamed. Those who are often have names that reflect men's wishful designation of positive attributes: Hannah/grace, Shua/independence, Malcah/queen. This exhibit challenges such stereotypes. For example, Judith, a mixed-media sculpture by artist Julie Dermansky, is not the lithe and graceful maiden of 16th-century painting, decorously carrying the head of Holofernes like a gift-wrapped parcel in a basket. Rather, this Judith has fractured her wrist with the very effort of decapitating the tyrant."

— A.S.A.

September 11: The Yahrzeit's Lessons

Manhattan's Museum of Jewish Heritage is a sadly perfect institution to commemorate the first anniversary of September 11: it is located downtown, it defines itself as "A Living Memorial to the Holocaust," and it was built on landfill excavated to build the World Trade Center. And **Jill Vexler,** a cultural anthropologist with years of experience memorializing loss of life and culture in cities around the world, was the perfect guest curator to collect the artifacts for this exhibit.

"Yahrzeit: September 11 Observed" runs until January 5, 2003. "As I asked people 'Where were you on September 11?' that very, very simple question opened a flood of information," Vexler told LILITH. Vexler also said that while many in her field speak up on behalf of third world societies, recording urban life is very much in their purview too. The show's objects include a helmet from a firefighter who died, the palm pilot from which a rabbi read the traveler's prayer when stuck underground in the subway, and children's drawings from the days immediately following the destruction.

Vexler believes that museums have many different opportunities to spur people's engagement with social issues. During the months when she was researching "Yahrzeit," she found herself in the company of a variety of volunteers, including psychiatrists who were planning to travel to El Salvador when September 11 diverted their attention closer to home. Vexler, who'd lived and worked in Latin America for almost 10 years and is fluent in Spanish, caught the attention of Disaster Psychiatry Outreach (DPO), a volunteer organization that provides disaster mental health services.

Vexler has since linked up with DPO to establish, at a children's museum in El Salvador, a mental health center that deals with the aftermath of civil war and earthquakes. At the museum, Vexler discovered 20,000 square feet of unused exhibition space, and is now in the process of giving them an exhibit she owns that recreates three traditional kitchens—from Greece, Thailand and Mexico.

"Is this activism?" Vexler asks. "It's taking the tools we have and plugging them in to ways that can help other people. We listened carefully, asked questions and wove a fabric of problems and solutions."

—JODI WERNER

The Museum of Jewish Heritage
Battery Park City, New York, NY
www.mjhnyc.org
(212) 509-6130

kol ishah

Michal Rovner: The Space Between

This fall the Whitney Museum in New York featured the first comprehensive exhibit of Israeli artist Michal Rovner, whose multimedia art explores the metaphysical with images of wars and borders. LILITH featured Rovner's art on our Fall 2000 cover.
www.whitney.org/information/press/85.html

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Gender-bending on the Yiddish stage

More than 50 years ago **Isaac Bashevis Singer** wrote the short story *Yentl the Yeshiva Boy*, about the young *maydl* in Poland who dresses as a boy in order to study Torah. The tale still resonates. Until December 29, New York's Folksbiene Theater presents Yentl's tale in Yiddish (with English translation via headsets). The poignant plot explores triangular relationships, cross-dressing, the sometimes fluid boundaries of sexual desire, and the fate of a woman too besotted with love for Torah study to be a sock-darning wife to the man she loves.

RICHIE FAHEY

Eleanor Reissa as Yentl.

Jewish Sex-Ed

"Vagina, vagina, vagina." It could have been a performance of The Vagina Monologues, or a women's consciousness-raising group. But a synagogue youth event?

Each winter, the ninth-grade Sunday school class at Washington Hebrew Congregation (WHC) in Washington, D.C. piles onto busses for a weekend retreat entitled "A Jewish View of Love, Sex, and Marriage." WHC was "among the first congregations to take seriously the notion of sexual identity and education, with a religious view that was not about abstinence but about education and Jewish values," notes **Rabbi Joui Hessel**, who helps arrange the weekend. Senior **Rabbi M. Bruce Lustig**, who originated the sex-ed retreat 19 years ago, originally used a Unitarian sexuality education curriculum as a base for the retreat program, adding Jewish texts, viewpoints, and values. Working with Lustig are sex educators **Amy and Charles Miron**, who have just authored *How to Talk With Teens About Love, Relationships, and S-E-X* (Free Spirit, 2002). Several of the weekend's workshops deal with factual information, such as sexual terminology and sexually transmitted infections, as well as pregnancy prevention. The workshop leaders pass out and demonstrate various types of contraception and safe sex aids, including foam, sponges, pills, male and female condoms, and dental dams. "You should see my shopping list!" laughs Hessel. Participants practice rolling condoms onto their fists and discuss the effectiveness and affordability of each item. Other sessions discuss what Jewish tradition and values have to say about sex, respect for the body, and defining human sexual needs within a Jewish context.

In the workshops on intimacy and making sexual choices, participants are divided by gender, and each group is asked to rank physical behaviors, ranging from holding hands to intercourse and oral sex, according to degree of intimacy. The guys and girls then meet and compare their results, often to mutual surprise. In addition, the teens talk about date rape and sexual harassment, dealing with sexual peer pressure, homosexuality and the rights of males and females in sexual relationships.

The Mirons say Judaism comes alive as teens begin to understand its positive attitude toward responsible sexual expression. The nine sessions over the three days are followed by family debriefing, where the participants perform verbally explicit skits about what they've learned. One scenario has a girl rejecting her date's suggestion of intercourse because they don't have a condom. The retreat "explores vital information that all teens need," the Mirons explain. But, they add, the "second true beauty of the retreat" is that "Jewish kids get a chance to see adults as available and approachable. They learn that their rabbis are there for them...no matter the subject."

Hessel says parents are grateful to the synagogue for taking "a lot of the heat off of them as disseminators of sex information. We've never had a complaint," she adds. **Dr. Nancy Miller**, whose daughter attended last year's retreat, had a very positive reaction to the program. "Oh, my," she said, "the thing I remember the most about that weekend is seeing my first dental dam!"

For sex educator Amy Miron, one experience stands out as both significant and symbolic of the goals the retreat leaders try to achieve. One year, she was approached by a girl who simply couldn't bring herself to say "vagina." To help her overcome this fear, Miron made a deal with the young woman: she herself would say "the v-word" whenever possible. "I would say things like 'Hi, how was your group? Vagina, vagina, vagina,'" she remembers. "At dinner that evening, a roar of applause erupted… [she] had finally said vagina." At the end of the retreat, the teen hugged Miron and thanked her. "What's the significance?" Miron sums up. "How could this young woman ever respectfully claim a part of her body that she couldn't even say out loud? Throughout the retreat the message all teens hear is that their bodies should be respected and taken good care of."

—ARIELLE DARBY

For information on Washington Hebrew Congregation's workshop, contact Rabbi Joui Hessel, 202-362-7100.

Women: The Changing Face of Orthodox Judaism

It is stunning to see a graybeard Orthodox rabbi with impeccable Talmud credentials stand before hundreds of women, and a sprinkling of men, and make halachic arguments for allowing women to ascend the bima to bless the Torah and read from the Torah in the presence of men.

Blu Greenberg, president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, has been saying for decades that "Where there is a rabbinic will, there is a halachic way." Both the will and the way were demonstrated at JOFA's Fourth International Conference in New York City in November, where **Rabbi Daniel Sperber**, was one of several religious authorities buttressing the new constructs for women's fuller participation in Orthodox Jewish ritual. With hundreds of religiously literate Orthodox women taking their conference notes back to their communities in North America and Israel, the rabbis' support of greater synagogue equality for Orthodox women could have vast impact.

Sperber, with flowing gray beard and brown velvet yarmulke, laid out in a scholarly voice 14 points demonstrating the rabbinic concept that the dignity of the individual (*k'vod habriot*) overrides the dignity of the community or congregation (*k'vod hatzibbur*). It has been the appeal to *k'vod hatzibbur* that has kept women from having an aliyah and reading from the Torah during services.

Another rabbi, **Mendel Shapiro** argued that the only tenable halakhic objection to women's aliyot in a traditional minyan of men is the dignity of the congregation. His 52-page "*Qeri'at ha-Torah* (Public Torah Reading) by Women: A Halakhic Analysis" which he wrote three years ago came to public attention a year ago on the Web site of Edah, the Modern Orthodox organization that has worked closely with JOFA (www.edah.org).

Rabbi Shapiro's goal, inspired by his younger daughter's bat mitzvah, is to "create a halakhic steamroller" to flatten out all formal objections to women's aliyot. Then the community, he said, can determine its own reality. "My article is in many ways subversive, but I'm not trying to subvert the synagogue," he told conference participants. The new Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem's German Colony, influenced by his paper, allows women to have aliyot and read from the Torah.

Congregation Darkhei Noam on New York's Upper West Side, also influenced by Shapiro's paper, has opened its *bima* to women. The issue is dividing Kehilat Orach Eliezer, also on the Upper West Side, where a vote will take place in the next few months.

But even out of the synagogue, Orthodox women continue to bear the burden of temptress. The conference offered up various interpretations of *tzniut* (modesty). **Rabbi Saul Berman** took the high road with *tzniut* as a broad-reaching value of daily living. Berman, director of Edah and former chairman on the Jewish Studies Department at Stern College for Women, cast modesty as a guiding principle for religious study, weddings, funerals, home design, war and wealth—not just dress and sexual conduct in our sex-obsessed society.

Tova Hartman Halbertal addressed the oppression of *tznuit,* burdening Orthodox women to cover themselves to "protect men from their [own] sexual incontinence." Halbertal, a lecturer at Hebrew University, is the author of the soon-to-be-published book *Appropriately Subversive: Modern Mothers in Traditional Religions.*

Finally, the conferees were invited by psychiatrist **Michelle E. Friedman** to participate in a survey on the sexual satisfaction of Orthodox women. The study seeks to discover if their feelings match the surprising findings that 40% of women and 30% of American men report significant sexual dissatisfaction. Orthodox women wishing to answer the questionnaire can phone Dr. Friedman at (212) 799-5723. Participation is anonymous.

—AMY STONE

kol ishah

Practice safe politics

Jewish Women Watching, the anonymous folks who monitor sexism in the Jewish community, have again sneaked into the limelight. In September, JWW mailed to the media and others what appeared to be a Jewish New Year's greeting. The envelope contained a condom glued to a card, along with advice to "Practice Safe Politics." Recipients turned the card over to find a dressing-down to the Jewish establishment for being in bed with Christian Right figures **Pat Robertson**, **Jerry Falwell**, and **Ralph Reed**, men with well-publicized anti-gay and anti-women agendas. The Israeli Embassy in New York and several Jewish organizations, including the Zionist Organization of America and The Anti-Defamation League, have honored one or more of these men because of their outspoken support for Israel.

Recipients are warned, "This condom will not protect you from the real intentions of the Christian right wing. ABSTINENCE FROM STRANGE BEDFELLOWS IS ADVISED."

THINK TANK

Fighting Anti-Semitism in Switzerland

BY BRIGITTE SION

I am a Jew in Switzerland, one of the last European countries to grant full civil rights to its Jews—in 1866. I am a woman. In Switzerland, women were not granted the right to vote until 1971. And I am an activist in the 18,000-member Swiss Jewish community, where most keep as low a profile as possible. For the last five years, my job has been to openly fight anti-Semitism: reacting to letters to the editors or op-eds, confronting political statements, testifying at trials against Holocaust deniers, lecturing students and teachers about the history of anti-Semitism.

Death threats by e-mail. I'm supposed to shut up.

My commitment to Jewish activism came naturally after years of community involvement as a youth leader and Hebrew school teacher in Geneva. The year that I graduated from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism —1997—coincided with an outbreak of anti-Semitism in Switzerland that followed a national debate about Swiss actions during World War II. Accepting an offer to lead a Geneva-based Jewish organization, the Committee Against Anti-Semitism and Defamation (CICAD), was a chance for me to use my skills for a cause in urgent need of spokespersons. I also hoped to play an active role in a national controversy, unusual in a country that likes to bury its dirty secrets in Alpine caves.

I was 27, full of passion and energy, feeling strongly about my Jewish identity. I needed to prove that I, young and female and Jewish, could be the one in the trenches, ready to fight back.

Beginning in 1996, investigations had revealed the extent of Holocaust victims' dormant accounts in Swiss banks, money which the Swiss government had made no attempt to return to the families of its rightful owners. These reports triggered a wave of graffiti and insults, boycott campaigns and physical aggression against Jews in Switzerland. Politicians and bank officials made shocking statements: then-President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz said that Switzerland was victim of "blackmail" and "extortion," while one of the leaders of the nationalist Swiss People's Party, Christoph Blocher, accused the Jews of being "only interested in money."

Then came the Intifada in the fall of 2000, which gave the Swiss an opportunity for counter-attack on moral grounds. "Jews wanted to give us lessons of justice? Well, they are no better, look what they do in Ramallah!" Today, pro-Palestinian demonstrators in Switzerland openly shout anti-Jewish slogans and hand out leaflets calling for boycott of all Israeli goods. Carmel melons and Jaffa oranges have mysteriously disappeared from supermarket stands. Weekly letters to the editors with anti-Semitic content are published in the local media, and citizens identified by their Jewish garb often suffer from intimidation. Those acts do not compare to France, Belgium, or Germany, where synagogues are burnt down, cemeteries desecrated and Jewish kids attacked. But in Geneva, the Holocaust memorial is sprayed with graffiti every week. Jewish communal buildings receive extra attention from the police, and hate mail and public insults regularly target Jewish leaders.

Like myself.

It started with anonymous hate mail. "We're sick of you Jews, go back to your kibbutz," along with the routine "Sorry Hitler didn't finish his job." Then came the (fake) anthrax letter, slipped into my home mailbox. In February 2002, after I was interviewed on a major talk show, I received death threats by e-mail: "You deserve a knife under your throat, unless you prefer a bullet in your head." I sued the author of the threats. After a police investigation, the prosecutor filed away the complaint, because, according to him, the author "never had the intention to kill." His message was "just an expression of anger" after what I had said. According to the prosecutor, if there is no serious intention to do what one has threatened, there should be nothing to worry about. Or to complain about. What if someone does have the intention to implement his written threats? It would be too late for the prosecutor to make such subtle distinctions.

In Switzerland, minorities are supposed to feel grateful for being tolerated. Rather than fight discrimination, I'm supposed to shut up.

But I don't want to please. Every single anti-Semitic act makes me more outspoken. ■

BRIGITTE SION, director of CICAD in Geneva from 1997 to October 2002, is now Vice President of Programs at the Jewish Funders Network in New York.

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Praying for Protection

BY SUE WILLIAM SILVERMAN

Even though I'm Jewish, I attended an Anglican elementary school when my family first moved from Washington, D.C. to the West Indies. I loved the church that was next to the school, the sunstruck stained-glass windows, the whisper of silken robes, the holy Fathers chanting. I was transfixed by the serene eyes of a plaster Jesus who returned my gaze as if in benediction. One day I was given a ruby-colored rosary. For hours, I'd trail the beads through my fingers, each bead a miniature sun radiating warmth up my arms to my heart. I believed my rosary was blessed with special powers, that it would protect me from nights when my Jewish father shattered the peace of my bedroom and raped me. With the magical thinking of an abused child, I believed that bad things only happened to little Jewish girls. I avoided synagogues and believed that churches offered me safety. I prayed to be resurrected as a Christian girl with blond, blond hair.

I believed that bad things happened only to little *Jewish* girls.

Now that Catholic boys, betrayed by their religious Fathers, are painfully speaking out, I find myself wondering if they—parallel to me—fantasized about safety in temples? Did they wish to flee Latin prayers, and seek comfort in Hebrew? Did they imagine that a golden Star of David could protect them?

I understand why they were scared to reveal their secrets, how they were silenced by church Fathers intoning sermons, silenced by Cardinals and even the Pope, whose power was absolute. I, too, felt that the sins of my upper-middle-class Jewish father—a man who conducted important meetings to establish statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, who worked to implement home rule for the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico—were hidden by the prestige of his profession. While he stood lit by flashbulbs, his picture snapped with luminaries like President Truman and Adlai Stevenson, who saw the image of one shattered child just outside the frame?

No one, oddly, questioned my love for my rosary. No one asked why, on Ash Wednesday, I was first in line to have my forehead anointed with a charcoal cross. Not wanting it to smear with sweat in the tropical heat, I cooled myself with a palm-frond fan. My mother never questioned why, that evening, I cried when forced to wash my face. This mute language I "spoke" was never heard, was never translated into anyone knowing the fear I felt listening to my powerful father's footsteps walk toward me at night.

We need to hear more truths; to create a culture that explicitly teaches children—in schools and synagogues, mosques and churches—that closed societies of powerful men enable them to abuse those with no power. We need to let children know precisely to whom they can turn with their truths, that speaking out is safe and the right thing to do. Then, we can help children reclaim their own power. Only by hearing children's voices can we redeem the world. ■

SUE WILLIAM SILVERMAN is the author of two memoirs: *Because I Remember Terror, Father, I Remember You*, and *Love Sick: One Woman's Journey through Sexual Addiction.*

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Jewish Girls and African-American Nannies

Listening in on a profoundly loving and complex relationship the world ignores

In the last issue of LILITH, we put out a call for Jewish women who, as children, had had close relationships with African-American nannies or housekeepers. (We knew this was in some ways a politically verboten topic, despite the focus of this year's best-selling book, "The Nanny Diaries.") The response surprised us, not only because so many women contacted us, but because the timbre of the e-mails, phone calls and hastily penned paragraphs was urgent and emotional. The women spoke of love, gratitude, loyalties, regrets, guilt, and the complexities of race and caste in these powerful, often primary, relationships. Even women whose families had only weekly household cleaning help reported complicated feelings around these relationships. Every woman LILITH spoke with commented that this was the first time someone outside their families had taken seriously "a connection that so potently informed my life," as Laurie Gunst, from Dubois, Wyoming, put it. "I've been waiting to talk about this," Gunst explained, "for a very long time."

"Thank you for triggering my memories of Mercedes," wrote Joanne Drapkin of Bandon, Oregon. "I haven't thought about her for literally decades. I shared a bedroom with her for two years when I was five to seven, yet I don't even know her last name. My mom would know, but she passed away. I have no idea how she influenced my life, but I'm positive she did. She was kind and so comforting, and I know I loved her. I wish my family had valued her enough to stay in touch."

"There aren't words to describe what Dorothy [Faust] has meant to me," Arlene Hazelkorn of Scottsdale, Arizona, wrote. "She has given me unconditional love for the past 44 years. As a child, I sometimes wished I could live with her full-time instead of with my family. Her house was my refuge. I felt very honored growing up with her, going to church, having her as part of my life."

"Jacky Classens saved me, actually she saved all of us," wrote Vivien Schapera of Cincinnati. "My brother's behavior was unusual—he cross-dressed and was gay—Mom and Dad fought all the time, and I was an 11-year-old former insomniac with daily headaches and stomach aches. Jacky stilled our angry voices, cooled our pain and patched our broken hearts. Where did she find the strength?"

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Eighteen-month-old Laurie Gunst with Rhoda Cobin Lloyd, Richmond, Virginia, 1950

Clearly, LILITH hit a geyser with this topic, in part because so many women were eager to talk about the African-American women who were hired to "live in" or "live out"—often a woman who was "our family therapist," or "the one who taught me morals and values," or "my sternest critic and my greatest defender," or "the mother who walked me down the aisle at my wedding"—but also, as Annette Ravinsky of Turnersville, New Jersey pointed out, because "nobody ever asks us about these intimate relationships which are so devalued," yet can be so profound.

Indeed, African-American female domestics and even nannies have inhabited one of the lowest rungs on the sociological ladder in America, and their relationships with children—especially girls, who seem to form much more intimate bonds with them than do their brothers—has spawned a literature so scant that it's disturbing. Yet up through the 1950s, being white in the South meant that you were very likely to have a black domestic in your household; the sheer numbers of them created a caste that harbored valuable and almost exclusive knowledge of the workings of two deeply segregated cultures, a caste that shuttled back and forth as community caretakers, and that was often "despised" by other African-Americans for its "weakness in conforming with what whites wanted," as Susan Tucker puts it in *Telling Memories Among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Segregated South.*

Lillian Smith, in *The Killers of the Dream*, says of her own early relationship with a black domestic, "I knew, but I never believed, that the deep respect I felt for her, the tenderness, the love, was a childish thing which every normal child outgrows. I learned…that the human relations I valued most were held cheap by the world I lived in."

In the interviews LILITH conducted, certain themes echoed and recurred. Many Jewish women harbored discomfort and even shame over how "one-way" their relationships had been. "I always felt guilty that I didn't know more about Scotty's family," said Rachel Kadish of Brookline, Massachusetts, of Isolyn Scott.

Some of this ignorance, of course, is part and parcel of childhood: the world revolves around us, and we are largely blind to whatever doesn't. Many women regretted that they didn't start asking anxiety-engendering questions about race and caste and their own privilege—or even about whether their nanny had children of her own!—until they were off at college, when it was often too late. These relationships often had no continuity built in—no ongoing contact with nannies' families, often no knowledge of their current addresses. None of the white women we interviewed (except one) had ever asked their nannies whether their parents or grandparents or great-grandparents had been slaves or sharecroppers. (In our interviews with the domestic workers, all of them spoke of forebears who were slaves), and the question upset several women "because," as Arlene Hazelkorn put it, "I feel appalled that it never occurred to me to ask." Race was a taboo household subject in the memories of the women with whom we spoke, and only Judi Samuels, of Newton, Massachusetts, remembered how her nanny had reacted when Martin Luther King was assassinated:

"Mattie Pearl [Winkler] was in mourning," Judi said. "She wore crepe and had a button with his portrait on her clothes. Those were dark days; she was in that devastated state for a long time. 'What will be the hope for us?' I remember her saying. That's when I realized, for the first time, that Mattie had an 'us' that didn't include me. Just like, I thought, our family's having the T.V. tuned to news about Israel all the time maybe didn't include Mattie."

Another set of feelings that some women mentioned was, as Samuels put it, "some ambiguity about whether I was allowed to have this love relationship," or, as another informant (requesting anonymity) said, "being anxiously aware of the fact that I preferred Louvenia [not her real name] to Mom," though a more universal feeling was that any loving non-family adult in the household was an out-and-out gift to

Mattie Pearl Winkler and Judi Samuels

any child. "Jacky was a 'safety valve,'" wrote Schapera, and Kadish said simply, "For a child, any grownup outside the family is necessary fresh air."

All of the LILITH readers with whom we spoke mentioned how important religion was to their childhood caregivers or domestic workers, and the latter concurred. Most read the Bible daily, all "praised the Lord" in regular conversation, and almost all attended Sunday church, often with little white girls in tow.

"When I stood in line 41 years ago trying to get a day job that paid more money," explained Lucy Johnson of Washington, D.C., "the woman ahead of me said, 'When I stand in line, I ask God to help me.' When I heard that I stepped out of the line, because I knew God was going to help me *with* or *without* the line. I bought a *New York Times*, answered an ad, and I've been walking with God in the Scheuer household ever since."

Linda Byard of Yellow Springs, Ohio, remembers Mrs. Harris (she never learned her first name) warning her "during a moment of my impertinence, that her Bible was my Bible, and I better shape up. While Mrs. Harris helped unwrap the Passover dishes, she also told me that the Passover story was her story. At the time, I could not think why she would tell me this," writes Byard, though the comment ultimately "stayed with me and is something I don't forget." "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient unto the day," Isolyn Scott used to tell Kadish. "Scotty had a difficult life, but she always said, 'Why worry when I can pray?'" Mamie W. Jackson used to tell the Scheuer children, "The Golden Rule. It covers most situations."

The white women we spoke with lacked a social or historical context for some of the more universal behaviors of their nannies. In the book *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestics in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940,* Elizabeth Clark-Lewis makes it clear that "training" was critical to young women whose race shut them out from virtually all avenues of employment besides domestic work. "Training" meant learning how to cook, iron, make beds and care for younger children, and the white women I spoke with emphasized that their black caretakers, more than their mothers, insisted that they learn these skills and, in the words of Hazelkorn, "do my household jobs every day." Most white women we spoke with also described their nannies as "a combination of strict and loving." All talked about their black caregivers' "toughness," "strength," and "endurance," without more broadly contextualizing these traits as fundamental to generations of African-American "mammies" or domestics (not to mention slaves) who needed these abilities to survive abject poverty, chronic anxiety about the safety and well-being of their own children, and unboundaried work that often left time only for Sunday church, and sometimes not even that.

Our Jewish informants also made a distinction between their biological mothers who were "busy and running" and their nannies, who would, as Samuels put it about Mattie, "always sit down. If Mattie was cleaning or cooking and we had something we wanted to tell her, she would sit down. I learned that from her and it's been invaluable: If someone has something to tell you, sit down."

White mothers were nearly universally remembered by their daughters as having importantly modeled loyalty, generosity and respect towards their domestic help, and of that being, in Elizabeth Scheuer's words, "a profound lesson." (Not one person mentioned her father in these discussions.) The employer's generosity was often, in fact, extraordinary, and a singularly Jewish aspect of it was an insistence that the domestic become educated.

Samuel's grandmother told Mattie that "if she was going to be a member of the household, she would have to get her G.E.D." Drapkin, who remembers almost nothing about her nanny recalls that "there was a bookcase on Mercedes' side of the room. I remember that," she said. "My parents believed in reading." And Imogene Ferguson of Brooklyn remembers "Mrs. Brodsky treating me like a daughter and insisting I go

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to school. She enrolled me in Oceanside High at night. I was the only inkspot there so she would sit in the back of the class with me. When we got home I would lie on her bed and she'd go over my homework."

Perhaps the most lasting and uncomfortable impression that stayed with us after listening to so many Jewish women talk about their intimate relationships with their African-American caretakers was that we Jewish women ourselves don't derive much self-esteem from our mothering; rather, we derive it from our educational degrees and our employment outside the home. Indeed, we ourselves seem to have internalized a devaluing of motherhood. Nearly every Jewish woman we interviewed talked about the difference between their biological mother's "expectations"—getting As in school, competing in extracurricular activities, practicing a musical instrument every day, training for a profession—and their nanny's "unwavering support and unconditional love, whether or not," as Scheuer put it, "I got a C+ on a quiz." But only the nannies echoed Dorothy Faust: "I just knew I loved those children without a doubt, it's just something God put in me. When you open your heart to children you tap into the deepest you, it's a well of love."

LILITH doesn't presume, in the narratives that follow, that our informant pool is either broad-based or representative (or that, as white interviewers, we didn't skew the response)—after all, these are women, both white and black, who wanted to talk to us about intimate relationships in their lives that have been lifelong, loving and even, in some ways, transcendent. Perhaps the most moving sentiment we heard was Rachel Kadish's in relation to her nanny, Isolyn Scott:

"When you love someone," Kadish said, framing her sentiments carefully, "you want to see the world from their point of view. Perhaps that is Scotty's most enduring gift to me."

Here are the stories of a few of the many women who responded to LILITH:

Judi Samuels, 53, Newton, MA

"Although my mother taught me many things that got me through life, Mattie Pearl [Winkler] taught me how to love. She never called me Judi, she called me Judidarlin'—that's the essence of the relationship. We were each other's darlin's.

Mattie came up from the South in 1940, she was 17, without any schooling and barely literate. She had left her baby back with a sister or grandmother. She stood outside a supermarket in Flatbush [Brooklyn] to see who was carrying the most bundles, because that person might need household help. That's how she first came to live in my maternal grandparents' Orthodox home and take care of my hasidic great-grandfather, *Zayde* Dovid. Mattie was devoted to him, she learned some Yiddish so she could talk with him, the two of them had a very strong relationship. She also took care of my mom, who was only four years younger than her, and my mom's brothers.

I know my grandparents paid her well—they had strong feelings about unions and workers' rights. My grandmother used to say, "You never pay a person without paying Social Security"—that was a law. They also couldn't bear having an illiterate in the house, so they made Mattie go to school and get her G.E.D. She was a family member and they expected her to behave that way, to read books. My grandmother also always assumed the Mattie was entitled to have a life. Mattie was a devout Baptist; on Sundays she'd be at church.

When my mom and her siblings were grown, Mattie moved out, married a wonderful man, Willie, brought her son Bobby up from the South and had a regular life. She worked for my grandma, then for my mom, for my uncles, for my father's cousin Sol, for my *zayde* on the other side of the family, even for our rabbi (my father was the Hebrew School principal). I remember the rabbi helping Mattie with things (like getting her a safe, affordable apartment) many times over the years. Everyone loved her, in all the households.

> I would tell Mattie things you wouldn't tell your mother - if you got your period, if you were making out with a guy.

Mattie was very patient, and she kept us in line, "Do your homework." She was physically demonstrative, hugging and kissing and giggling and touching. Everybody trusted her with their "souls." My brothers adored her and would tell her secrets. I would tell her things you wouldn't tell your mother — if you got your period, if you were making out with a guy. I considered her the most "real" person in the household— there was no affectation, she wasn't worried about what other people were going to think. She was "other"—my eye into the other—she was the only black and poor person we knew, she was a different class, she was the only person I knew who wasn't automatically educated, and she was *really* Christian. She was also brave and tough; she had left the only life she knew to live with strangers and learn a new culture. I loved my mother—she was creative, bright and devoted—but I was grateful I could have Mattie in another way, like having an affair. It had nothing to do with how much I loved my mother.

One year at *Pesach* (we didn't ride on *yontif*; so it was always at our house; my grandmother would be at our house for five days cooking), Mattie appeared suddenly in a white uniform. The uniform was her idea. She would bring one or two sons to help; she knew everything about *Pesach*. I was a teenager, and I thought, "My God, this looks like slavery!" I was in an enormous tumult in my brain, I was thinking we better not talk about what this seder is about! When the seder was over my grandfather—I adored him, I never thought ill about him about anything—took all the wine from half-drunk cups and poured it into a container, and put it aside for Mattie to take home. What was going on here? "What is that?" "Mattie will be so grateful to have it." I didn't understand. Alcohol, discards—I thought it was black stereotyping. "People spit in that

wine," I told my grandfather. "You think these people like spat-upon wine? We put our fingers in it! Why don't we *buy* her wine? There's a whole bottle we didn't open." My eyes were open—I thought we all had an equal relationship, but maybe the rest of my family didn't think that. For the rest of my life there was a taint—my grandfather who I adored.

My grandmother used to say, "You never pay a person without paying Social Security."

I started to hang out with Mattie's son, Alan. I'd call him on the phone. It was to get back at my grandparents. He was different. He was really handsome, in that forbidden way, we both had frizzy hair, he was sexy, he came from a different world. I told him how much I loved his mother. "Well," he said, "You have her all the time." It was my coming-of-age. I realized I *did* have her, and that meant he *didn't*. I felt terrible. I hadn't thought of her a lot as Alan's mother, shlepping all those hours on the train, living in the projects. No wonder Alan got in trouble. No one was there to guide him. I had two mothers, and he hardly had one. I had everybody, and my grandmother. I was rich in relationships. I felt very very bad about it, so bad.

I had one fight with Mattie when I was nine. I was so respectful to her, but this day the doorbell rang and I yelled up, "Mattie, can you get it?" And she yelled back at me, "Judydarlin', I'm an old woman! *You* go get that door!"

When I used to dream about my wedding as a young girl, there wasn't a groom; the love story was about Mattie being my matron of honor. But there was a ruckus about this for various reasons, and it didn't happen. I was very distraught.

Time passed, Mattie got older, Alan married a nurse and they had a deaf child. My mother, who's a speech therapist, did for this child like her mother had done for Mattie—this child belongs to *me*; I can help in a way no one else can. Mom constantly advocated for this daughter, opened doors for her, used her influence to get her into Lexington School for the Deaf. At all times, Mattie's family and ours felt like an extended clan, a weird extended clan.

Well, my first marriage ended, I had 3 children, and when I was 44, I was about to get married again. I'm paying for this wedding myself. I can do what I want. "Mattie, I want you to be the matron of honor at my wedding." It was the most remarkable thing in my life, my life came full circle. At the *bedeken* [the unveiling], it felt like I was "coming out," like I could proclaim to everybody there that I have this love, this essential part of me. Mattie and I, we were finally like two adults. It was fantastic.

A few years later, Mattie died. Her funeral was a Baptist Homecoming Service. She was dressed in a wedding gown in an open coffin, they lifted her body up to greet the Lord. Everybody was happy, she was greeting God.

All these women came over to me, I was sobbing my eyes out. "Are you Molly Winter [my grandmom] who's done so much for Mattie? Are you Betty [my mom]? Oh, you're Judidarlin'!" I was inconsolable, all these women were so worried about me. They did testimonies; I learned so much about Mattie's life, her rich life in the projects. She had this role at church as the woman who fed the poor. She had taken in this young man who had been completely strung out on drugs, she made him live with her. Mattie had taken on this whole retirement career; I didn't know anything about this part of her life.

The last time I saw Alan was at my own father's funeral, two years after Mattie's. I made sure Alan was notified of the death just like a family member. He made an enormous effort to come; he came back to the house just like family, and then one of my uncles drove him home. It was very important to me—as I was there for his mother's funeral, he was there for my father's. We were still an extended family.

So this is Mattie. If she hadn't been black, it would have felt different. We never talked about race, but I had some kind of identification with her world, and an affinity we had was that we were both very religious. I was very very proud that my family took care of her. Religion was huge to her, she was such a fulfilled person—it just oozed out of her. Mattie rounded out my life, and gave me a part of my life that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I didn't have to show up at shul or get an A on my report card. Mattie and I were so complete. I couldn't wait to talk about her.

Arlene Hazelkorn, 45, Scottsdale, AZ

"My earliest memory is of going to Dorothy's house—I used to go for days at a time. I was the little white, Jewish girl who attended Dorothy's all-black church regularly. Unc [Dorothy's uncle] was the minister and Aunt Eva prepared the *"oneg."* Dorothy's daughter Eleanor treated me like a big sister. I mean I *lived* over there—Dorothy's house was my refuge.

My mom and I struggled in our relationship. I used to want Dorothy to tell me what it felt like to work for my family, but she wouldn't talk about that; she feels it's dishonoring of them. All she'll say—like about one of my brothers—"Well, he's a different character, Arlene." I know Dorothy and I are closer than she and my brothers are.

When I got into high school, it was harder to see Dorothy ironing for us.

After my brother died, when I was two, there was a lot of blame, a lot of guilt. My father blames my mother—she was driving—but it's all unsaid. Mom blames herself. The loss of a child…your parents aren't available to you after that. Dorothy got to see *everything*, what the death of a child can do to a family. She was a stabilizing figure, a rock; she was going to be there no matter what. No one in my family ever mentioned my brother's name (my siblings still won't), and as a girl I used to

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debate this, did he really exist?—I was so little when he died. But if I brought it up, my mother would cry.

When I was five, Dorothy got married and I went to the wedding. Afterwards I was crying and crying because they had to go on their honeymoon. I expected to go home with her. Dorothy always made sure she was given respect in our household; she took good care of her own needs. She wasn't a maid—we were not to call her that. She was the one who raised me, and she was proud of what she did.

When my father would come pick me up at Dorothy's after a weekend, Eleanor would run and hide because my father was the "bad man" taking Arlene away from her. God, I didn't want to go home with him either! It was safe at Dorothy's; there wasn't craziness going on there—Cousin Peaches lived upstairs with her daughters Lottie and Dottie.

Growing up, Dorothy let me be me. She has no judgments. She was serious, though, about my household responsibilities—like she wouldn't make my bed. She showed me how to make hospital corners. Every day when I make my bed I think of Dorothy. When I was in high school (it was the 70's), I would smoke pot. Dorothy would just say, "Arlene, open the windows, your mom's going to be home soon for lunch."

My parents were major supporters of Martin Luther King, very liberal. I remember at the pool I'd see the black women sitting on the side, I'd think, "Thank God my parents don't make her come to the pool and watch me." When I got into high school, it was harder to see Dorothy ironing for us. She was there to take care of *me*, but I didn't need that anymore. I felt uncomfortable.

I'm a lesbian, for 16 years I've been in a relationship. I've never told Dorothy—it doesn't need to be said—but she *always* says, "Say hi to Beth." To me, Dorothy was an example of a strong female. She didn't have a lot of men around her. She would comment about black males, that they're not to be trusted, that they're no-goodniks. I saw her function on her own without a man; she worked, she parented, she was self-sufficient. She's still running a little day care—that's her karma.

I feel very honored that I grew up with Dorothy, going to church, having the experiences I had with her. She is a woman filled with love; there aren't words enough to describe what she has meant to me.

When I think of Dorothy and her house, well…I would have been content to stay there my whole life.

Dorothy Faust, 64, North Chicago, IL

"I started working for Arlene's family when she was one year old—her brothers were in school already—and taking care of her was my main job. I would put everything down—cleaning, ironing, I hate cooking like God hates sin—to take Arlene to the park, or be there for whatever she needed. She wasn't spoiled, she was a good child. It was a big relief to the Hazelkorns that I loved those children without a doubt. I shopped time after time after time for Arlene, I'd go to the stores and just get little outfits. I'd dress her up and let her run around the house in her pretty dress.

It meant a lot to me that the Hazelkorn family was very fair and liberal, they were such good people—some white parents wouldn't let their kids come home with me [to a black neighborhood]. I was paid according to the pay at that time. I would get extras; I never felt I was taken for granted. They were like my family—when they were in trouble, I was there and vice versa. Arlene's brother was killed in a car accident when Mrs. Hazelkorn was driving him to the dentist; that was a hard time for all of us, that hit us all like a rock. It was unbelievable that that child wouldn't come through the house and slap me and say, 'Hey, Dorothy!' I got closer to all of them then to help them mend. Over the years, whenever they burned a Jewish candle to remember their son, they would also light a candle for me, because I saved Arlene's life for having taken her home that day. That child always wanted to come home with me.

> I was paid according to the pay at that time.

Kids have always taken to me, even when their mom is sitting right there. When I ran a daycare, I had a waiting list at all times. I yell at them, but it's all in love. I don't scold them hard. Children are more sensitive than a parent gives them credit for, and they do a lot better when somebody outside the family loves them and will do for them.

Mamie W. Jackson with Scheuer family

The world is wiser and wickeder than it used to be, one person will hurt another without thinking twice; that hurts me.

We've been together for so long, Arlene and me, been through so much, and whenever she comes up, I fix her elbow noodles, Creamettes, with American cheese or butter. As Arlene grew up, I grew with her. You got to grow when they do—it's very painful. Arlene is my oldest child. Everybody knows.

Annette Ravinsky, 42, Turnersville, NJ

"My immigrant Grandmom Sarah first found Miss Lula [Lula Cochran] going through garbage on the street—this was in Philadelphia in 1919 or 1920, and Lula was homeless and hungry. She had come up from South Carolina. Grandmom took her in and Miss Lula stayed with my grandparents for 50 years, until Grandmom Sarah and Grandpop Abe died; they left Lula enough money to live on for the rest of her life. Lula always called my father "my baby" (my Grandmom worked, Miss Lula is the one who raised him), and I thought of her as my grandmother. She never had family of her own.

Lula was born in 1897, and we buried her in the oldest African American cemetery in America—Eden cemetery in Springfield, PA. It's beautiful there. After she died, my mom and I used to visit her there a couple times a week. I'd get really emotional at her grave. Miss Lula always kept a big black Bible on the kitchen table, and that's where we'd talk. If I had any problems, we would talk and talk. She would sing when she was working, like in the kitchen, "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel"—so growing up, I thought spirituals were Jewish songs. When Miss Lula had errands to do, she would take me along.

I'm interested in genealogy, and I include Miss Lula in our family tree. But when I tried to find out about her biological family, all I could track down was her death certificate, and all it said was "mother's name unknown," "father's name unknown." African Americans actually didn't get birth certificates in those days! It makes me sad. I feel like Jewish genealogy and African-American genealogy have similarities—records were destroyed or not kept at all. The only people who can trace their genealogy with a lot of ease are Protestant Americans.

Growing up, it seemed like the people who gave me the most attention and love were big, heavy-set people. My parents were big; they would always hug me. Miss Lula was a really big woman, and she always gave me a really big hug. I associate big people with love and comfort and all that good stuff. I have negative associations with being skinny—when Miss Lula and my father got skinny, it was because they were sick. They started wasting away, and then we realized they were dying.

I have such feelings of love for Lula. This might be offensive to some people, but whenever I see a big black woman all dressed up beautifully, walking down the street on the way to church, I always feel that love.

Dorothy and John Faust
Inset: Arlene Hazelkorn, age 3

Imogene Ferguson, 57, Brooklyn, NY

"I came up from Greenville, South Carolina when I was 17. I was 15 when my first child, Janice, was born, and I was working in a white restaurant. At that time, they didn't allow black women to be waitresses and be up front, you were in the back. If the white waitress isn't there, you have to take orders, but you're not allowed to take the tip. My boss wanted something sexual—they do stuff to black gals, you have to be careful to keep yourself out of the way of white men. My aunt was very upset, we didn't know what to do. I went to an employment agency; they had three jobs: I picked New York because it was the only place I ever heard of.

My girlfriend Laura and I cried and cried on the bus—we started crying and we cried all the way to New York. My first family, the man comes into the bathroom, "My wife isn't here." I said, "Forget that, I'm leaving." There was nowhere to go! Mrs. Cohen and Laura came and got me, and Mrs. Cohen talked her girlfriend, Terry Brodsky, into taking me. Terry didn't need me, her boys were in college.

Terry and I cleaned together. Washing windows, I'd wash from inside, and she'd wash from outside. She used to dress me beautifully; every time Mr. Brodsky brought back something (he worked in the garment district)—blouses, slips for Terry—he brought me something, too. When Mr. Brodsky was away, I would sleep in Mrs. Brodsky's bed. You could not tell me that I wasn't her child.

Terry said, "If you're with me, you're going to go to school." She enrolled me in Oceanside High at night. I was the

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only inkspot there; she would sit in the back of the class with me. She always told me I was smart. She found people for me to work for—ironing, babysitting—she needed to approve of where I went because I was like her daughter.

Papa and Mama Mandel, they were Polish Jews. Mrs. Mandel didn't speak a word of English, but when I was sick she'd make me chicken soup and put a wet cloth on my forehead. Poppa would tell me about the pogroms, he would start crying, stories about the soldiers coming in and raping the women. He was trying to tell me that he understood about slavery because it happened to him. He would stroke my cheek and say something in Polish.

I used to cry all night because I had left Janice, my baby. Mr. Brodsky said, "What can we do to stop this child from crying?" I didn't want to say "I want my baby," so I said, "I want a red dress." The next day Terry bought me a beautiful beautiful red brocade dress. I also had a white silk dress that moves around my legs like Marilyn Monroe. What 17 year old has a dress like that? Mrs. Brodsky tried so hard to give me self-esteem. She was the first person in my life to tell me I was pretty.

Well, I fell in love and got stupid. I wanted to bring my baby to New York, and James said he was going to marry me and we could all live together. It was past bad. He was abusing me, he isolated me from everyone, he never wanted me to go to Mrs. Brodsky's. He ripped the phone out of the wall. I was pregnant with twins, and he literally beat them out of me—they both died. My hearing is gone from him kicking me in the head.

> I went to the Brodskys two or three days a week to do day work, but really I went there to cry and have my asthma attack and for someone to love me.

Terry tried to get us to counseling. I would pretend I was cleaning and go to a friend of hers for counseling myself. For a number of years I went to the Brodskys' two or three days a week to do day work, but really I went out there to cry and have my asthma attack and for someone to love me. When I didn't have money for food, she would have her brother—he owned a supermarket—bring groceries to me. That period with James was so bad, he wouldn't let me be in touch with

Thoughts for the Now-Grown Girls... An interview with psychotherapist Katherine Jungreis, Ph.D., L.I.C.S.W.

The African-American nannies described on these pages are clearly very beloved women, but they also arouse some feelings of guilt and culpability on the part of white family members. Even if one's family treats the domestic worker fairly and well, being white makes you inescapably a part of a larger race-challenged society where whites' feelings towards blacks are laden with discomfort and a certain sense of responsibility. Also, Americans don't know how to *do* service class: We're informal as a culture, we don't easily acknowledge differentials in power—so this becomes a source of uneasiness, too.

Add to this the developmental piece (the fact that children who have nannies will generally, at some maturational point, feel themselves to be better educated, and headed towards more privileged futures than their nannies), and the Jewish piece—that having liberal religious values and a honed sensitivity to oppression creates its own identifications and tensions. And what do you have? Well, these intensely intimate relationships going hand-in-hand with some potent "non-discussables." The white women in these pages didn't talk about race (or class) with their nannies—big surprise! Most Americans don't talk about these things, and that's simply reflected in these relationships.

Children's relationships with their nannies are like those we have with our therapists—it's this odd combination: very intimate on the one hand, yet one-sided, lacking in mutuality. The love between nanny and child is true, but the nanny (like the therapist) knows the other's *whole* universe, while the child knows little of the nanny's. For kids, this is appropriate—only as we grow up do we begin to understand that adults are people with their own lives and perceptions and desires. *Of course* children love these women! Who doesn't want a "mother" who always puts our needs first, and who is less powerful than we are? Also, Mom and Dad, appropriately, have larger "agendas" for their children, whereas the nanny is free to be like the caring aunt or loving grandparent. Nannies have a perspective that's outside the family system. That's so relieving for a child. One's nanny or housekeeper doesn't have the authority of our mom, so she's also much less scary.

Those of us who had nannies often still idealize them, seeing them as "perfect"—their full selves or negative parts of themselves either blocked out or not experienced with any emotional force. The curious piece here is that at the time that children begin, developmentally, to *de*-idealize parent-figures and to take in the notion that grownups have many "sides," the need for the nanny in the household decreases and by then often she's gone. Our emotional memory gets frozen in time.

If we could go to our childhood nannies as adults with curiosity about their full lives, it would be a gift. What's it *like* to be black—and for some, poor—in this country? What was it *like* to take three trains home in the winter, to have our mothers give you our old, chipped dishes, to see me have a lot more advantages than your kids? We want to hear that we were the greatest joy in our parent-figures' lives, that the caring was done totally without ambivalence or cost. Can we stand hearing that *both* are true: the love, and also the difficult parts? that if our beloved childhood nanny hadn't been, say, black and poor, she would have chosen very different work? Can we talk about why our culture perceives domestic childcare as demeaning? Can we ask our domestic worker what, in her estimation, comprises being treated "well" and what hurts? Can we redress the regret we feel that even though we were kind to our childhood nanny, even though we loved her (and she loved us), we knew hardly anything about her everyday life, what it was really like to *be* her?

If, as adults, we have the luxury of taking care of a Mamie Jackson or a Mercedes With-No-Last-Name or a Terry Brodsky, then, in some way, indeed, a line has been crossed. They have genuinely become family.

anybody. I know Mr. Brodsky died, and Terry got re-married, and I know she moved to New Haven, Connecticut. But then I lost track of Terry.

Eventually I turned my life around. I got my G.E.D., I graduated from Brooklyn College. I had five kids. I found a wonderful husband. I'm a political activist—I started out with the Equal Rights Amendment as a feminist; I was the only black in the League of Women Voters; I worked all kinds of political campaigns, voter registration drives. I just retired as a caseworker for welfare. I started on welfare, and I ended on welfare. I spend my quality time at my Baptist church. During the week, I have to talk to God in snatches, but on Sunday I can tell him all that's going on.

If I'd stayed in the South, I probably would have ended up in a factory. My mom was a domestic for one family for 15, 20 years; my grandfather and father were sharecroppers, then they worked in an iron foundry. I'm one of 10 kids. My great-grandmother was born in slavery. It's a caste system down there in the South.

If I could see Mrs. Brodsky again I'd probably have a real heart attack and drop right here. I have furniture she gave me 40 years ago; these dishes I've carted around for years—I knew someday I'd have a beautiful home, and I'd have the dishes. She taught me all about chopped liver, how to set a table. I sat at the table for seders; holidays were wonderful for me. I loved Terry Brodsky.

Next week I'm moving to a 90% Jewish retirement community; I'll be the youngest one there. I'm an activist and the people down there like it, they can smell it. I know what racism is, I know it in all its forms, but I can't afford anger and bitterness—it stops me from going where I want to go. I believe we are all children of God and that's because of Terry Brodsky.

I'm very proud of knowing Mrs. Brodsky, and I'm very proud of having come from nothing. I would give money for her to know I was all right now. I just always wanted her to know what a good job she did with me, fostering my development, giving give me an education. And guess where I was this weekend? at my daughter Janice's bat mitzvah! She's 43. She married a Jewish man; they give a lot of charity. All my stories about Terry Brodsky…I'm sure she had something to do with that.

Lucy Johnson with Elizabeth Scheuer's brother and mother

Rachel Kadish, 33, Brookline, MA

"The first thing I want to say about Scotty [Isolyn Scott] is that she walked down the aisle at my wedding, like a fifth grandparent. My brother had Grandma on one side and Scotty on the other. This was very important to me.

Scotty "lived in" five days a week, and when we kids would get home from school, it would just be us and her and her "stories" on T.V. Sometimes Scotty would give us advice, which would always be religious-based. When she first came to live with us, her own kids were grown with families of their own—if they hadn't been grown, that would have felt very difficult for my family. Before Scotty came to live with us, actually, my parents had hired a nanny with a toddler. The

> Scotty was definitely a counterweight to Jewish women. She was always telling us to relax more and have more fun.

idea was that Pierre would grow up with us, too; we had a good school system. The nanny treated me and my sister, though, much better than she treated Pierre, so it didn't work out. With Scotty sometimes the gap in our circumstances complicated things for me; I often felt guilty.

Scotty ate her meals with us, though at first she was very uncomfortable with this. She had worked for a family before us where she had been more like a servant. If we were arguing with my mother, she'd kick us under the table, "Don't start in with your mother." We didn't talk about race at home, but we did talk about politics. Scotty never chimed in.

She was definitely a counterweight to Jewish women. She was always reading the Bible, telling us to relax more and have more fun. She doesn't put up with any crap, and that feels different to me than the "good Jewish woman" model who always "makes nice" in the family, and never says No. She was a constant and sane presence in my life and family; there was a steadiness to her.

Scotty's very frank and direct. When she's on my voice mail, it's "Scotty called," click. "You're putting on weight," she told me once when I came home from college. If my parents had been that blunt, I might have felt hurt or angry. You always knew when Scotty disapproved. She's also very sharp—in a different world she would have done very different work, I think, but she was at peace with where her life had taken her. She's a realist. Growing up with her, her outlook, to me, felt incredibly healthy. She's an amazingly joyful person, and she's had a difficult life. She has the most wonderful laugh, she sings when she laughs.

In high school, I didn't "outgrow" Scotty at all; to the contrary, I always wanted to know her opinion about my friends, and later my boyfriends. When I told people I was engaged, they all said "congratulations," but Scotty said, "Are you ready?" I appreciated that—she knew about life and she knew about me. When I said "yes," she said, "Then I'm really happy." I think she loves me, she tells me so. She's proud of me, she laughs at me sometimes, which is fine and good. My brother and sister and I are "hers;" she's proprietary.

Scotty was definitely not the only black person in my life —at my public school, my principal was black, my civics teacher was black, 25% of the kids were black. At college, Toni Morrison was my adviser. My whole life I've had enormous respect and curiosity and comfort with the black community. It feels important to me to build bridges, and I know Scotty has something to do with all this. When I was in college, a speaker once came to campus; he was pointing out that everyone is racist. "If you're in trouble," he said, "would you go to a white man or a black man for help?" I thought, "I'd go to a woman over a man. And first I'd go to a black woman. That's where I'd feel safe."

Joanne Drapkin, 52, Bandon, OR

"After World War Two, my parents bought a nice house in the suburbs-to-be [Hollis Hills, New York] and part of bettering themselves was that my father was expected to get "the help," so Mercedes was hired, and she and I shared a room for two years. Moms stayed at home in our neighborhood, but my mom found her life so isolating. She was a brilliant woman who ended up yelling a lot out of frustration. I remember she was always busy, busy, busy, and I was glad there was someone else to pay attention to me. Dad worked in the city six days a week, and was never home.

We were spoiled kids; my father designed Roy Rogers' guns and holsters, and I actually rode Trigger and met Roy. We had every toy imaginable. Mercedes and the Macklers' nanny were definitely my only contact with African Americans for years to come. Their skin was very black; they were beautiful and exotic. It's hard for me to believe that I don't even know Mercedes's last name, that I don't have a photo, that I somehow didn't ask my mother any of this while she was alive. If I could conjure Mercedes up, I'd want to know, "Were you okay living with us? Here you were dumped into this white family—for all I know you had children of your own." I would definitely want to say, "Thank you for all your love and care."

I have only two memories from those two years, both as vivid as if they had happened yesterday. One is of waking up screaming and of Mercedes coming right to my bedside. I was surrounded by fireflies and confused as to how they got there. By my pillow was an empty jar; obviously the holes I made in the lid were too large and they all escaped onto my pillow. I remember Mercedes quietly taking the bugs, one by one, and gently placing them back into a jar. There is something extremely magical and extremely comforting about this memory.

The other memory is of my parents being in Europe for a month, and by the end of it I was ready for my mother to return. I remember yelling at Mercedes, "You are not my mother and I don't have to listen to you!" I still feel badly that that might have hurt her.

Lucy Johnson, 77, Washington, DC

"I've lived with the Scheuers for over 40 years. My great-grandmother was a slave, my grandmom had 16 children, my granddaddy was a coal miner and a minister. Daddy was in the coal mines, too, and was a deacon—when you come from a coal mining town, that's as big as a black person could be. Mom was one of the first black women that graduated from West Virginia State College. She was a schoolteacher. But then the mines had closed in West Virginia, and we just didn't have the money. I only finished high school. I married too early and had five children and left my husband. I hit rock bottom.

I didn't have options as an African American, being poor—the only thing was to work for some rich family because the agency would pay your fare to New York. Like any mother, it was hard to leave my children, but I knew I would be sending money back, and we needed that money. My mom took the kids. When I left I had a child 18 months old. He was crying. If he'd been asleep, I'd have felt better. But I knew I'd be sending money home for those children.

My aunts they did domestic work. After awhile, it felt like I would do the same thing. So that's how I was a domestic worker from the start. All the people I worked for, natural they had money. I knew what I was getting into.

Well, first I worked for the Rothschilds, I was there for six months. I was doing $35 a week. If I walked the dog, they added two dollars a week. They should have been paying me more. That was one of the poor Rothschilds. So I answered Mrs. Scheuer's ad, and she said, "No children." I told a big lie to Mrs. Scheuer.

In the summer, Mrs. Scheuer was away; they traveled a lot, and I was just like the Mama when she wasn't there. I brought my children to help out in the summer home; I was supposed to be their aunt. My daughter would forget and say, "Hey, Mom." Well, after two years, I confided in one lady who worked at the summer home—that's how the story got out.

I was taking some things from the sun porch and Mrs. Scheuer was working in the flower garden. Judge Fein's wife said, "Which one of the girls is yours?" I felt cold and then hot, I didn't know what to say. I told her the truth.

Mrs. Scheuer was broad-minded. I was just lucky. Every time I turned around, she was giving me a bonus. My children was independent; they took care of themselves—they didn't resent my taking care of white children. My daughter came to us when she was 13 and she stayed for three or four years. My granddaughter Jackie was six years old and she stayed with us for five years. I had another daughter and son who came from Cleveland and stayed six months. Mrs. Scheuer had asked me about them. "How is everything in Cleveland?" And I said, "You'll see them, they're here." Now that was nervy. I just thought, "I'll bring them home." The Scheuers always had enough room for all of us. We lived right across the street from Washington Cathedral.

Now Jackie, she didn't know any different—she thought the Scheuer kids were her sisters and brothers. It was one big family. You can't feel like you're really family, I just felt like Mrs. Scheuer was my best friend.

I never had an attitude about black and white. In West Virginia, there was more white kids I played with. Once, these playmates were with other white kids, and they started singing, "Nigger, nigger, black as tar. Can't get to heaven in a white man's car." I just feel like people just didn't know, they just repeated what they learned from their parents. I brush it on over. Educated white people are quite different, I think.

To me, I felt the Scheuers were big shots; they got to be bigger shots as the years went on, then he was an ambassador—it made it very nice. I liked that they celebrated everything, too —Chanukah, Christmas, everything. I had a blessed life. I'm a great believer in God helping me. God just sent me here.

Elizabeth Scheuer, 48, Riverdale, NY

"Our first live-in nanny came from the South, she wore a white uniform and took great pride in having a profession, she had business cards that said "Mamie W. Jackson, Licensed Maternity Nurse." She came for what everyone thought would be one or two months (when my oldest sibling was born), but ended up staying for eight years, until my youngest sibling—there are four of us—was born. Then she retired. After that, she still spent summers with us for many years (my parents only came out to the summer house on weekends—Dad was a member of Congress and traveled a lot; Mom maintained her business in New York as an interior designer). For the last years of her life, Mamie still managed to visit a couple of times a year for two weeks or so at a time. When she came, she'd do lots of accrued mending.

She had limited education, but she taught me more about morals and values than my parents did. She was strict about manners, and rights and wrongs, but she also unconditionally

When I came to New York for law school, Mamie was old, and our roles reversed. I would do things to look after her. Can I buy you groceries? How's the chemo?

loved us. There was a lot of mutuality in the relationship between Mamie and my siblings and me: there was respect and loyalty on both sides, and real tenderness.

When I came to New York for law school, Mamie was old, and our roles reversed. I would do things to look after her. Can I buy you groceries? How's the chemo? She lived in a housing project at 106th Street and First Avenue, and I saw her often, taking the bus across Harlem. Mamie had lost a daughter at Metropolitan Hospital (before we knew her) and she always said, "Whatever happens, don't ever let me get taken to Metropolitan!"—but she had a stroke and that's where they took her. The first thing my sister and I did was have her transferred to Columbia-Presbyterian.

She died of cancer shortly before my wedding—she was 83. In retrospect, I wish I had known more about her life, more about her family, but I guess the relationship was more just about love. I told her many times that I loved her.

When I was seven, Lucy [Johnson] came to our household, too, as a housekeeper/cook, and she still lives in my parents' home on a more-or-less retired basis. Lucy was the person who raised us—we all refer to her as our "other mother," my brothers call her Granny Lucy. We weren't very Jewish, but I do remember my mother once, uncharacteristically, hosting some Jewish women's group, and one of them asked something about being kosher. My mother apparently had a blank, baffled look on her face, so Lucy—she's quick—jumped right in: "Those are the meat, the others are the dairy," she said, pointing randomly to some china. Lucy often says, "You've done so much for me" (my siblings and I paid for her dental work; she loves to travel and we've sent her on many trips over the years —a cruise to Alaska, a trip to visit us in Israel, many trips to the flat that we maintain in London), but we always answer, "You've done so much for *us*." There was mutuality in my parents' and Lucy's relationship as well—they could unqualifiedly rely on her, and she could depend entirely on a comfortable home, a safe haven. My parents helped Lucy's granddaughter (she lived with us) through private high school in Washington, and she went on to Vassar, my mother's alma mater.

I don't think Mamie's or Lucy's being black brought special things to our relationships—my grandparents had two live-in Irish women for 30-40 years, and I've had an English nanny, Janis, living with us for 18 years (she has no children of her own), and for the last eight years also a lovely Brazilian housekeeper with her child, Gabrielle, who's now seven. My two younger kids think of her as close to a sister.

To some extent, I am, yes, replicating my childhood. I want my four children to have the gift we had of our housekeepers' and nannies' love. My last child's middle name is Lucy. Being able to do that was so important to me. ■

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METAMORPHOSIS

MATRONYMIC

materfamilias

BY EDGAR M. BRONFMAN

We're actually in a new era, with a deep new gender consciousness around names. In the space of just a few weeks, Lilith received these disparate —and fresh—pieces of the names puzzle: why women and men should be called to the Torah by their mother's names, the female roots of common Jewish last names, a young groom electing to take his bride's last name as his own, women reclaiming the Jewish tribal status of "kohen," and much more.

Through these authors the zeitgeist speaks.

THE NEW YORK TIMES **WEDDINGS** SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 2002

Jodi Rosensaft, Michael Savere

...ast of my time with. What ab... Mr. Savere proposed in June 2000. After a year they began discussing the specific plans for the wedding, and the subject of surnames came up. Mr. Savere suggested that he take hers, and she agreed.

"He realized the importance of my family's name, which unfortunately all but died out during the Holocaust," said Ms. Rosensaft, an only child. "Mike said he wanted to ensure the continuity not only of the name, but of the legacy attached to the name. My family understood the meaning behind the gesture and were very moved."

In the 12th century, Maimonides decreed that the mother would determine whether or not the child was halakhically Jewish. Before this point, the father was the determinant of Jewish identity; the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were Jewish meant that their offspring were Jewish also.

Maimonides made his ruling about matrilineal descent for two very valid reasons. One, while fatherhood can be a matter of opinion, motherhood is a matter of fact. Two, if during a war women were raped, and some women conceived, then what to do with the issue if the old rules were followed? It was thus established that whether or not a child is Jewish depends on the mother. So why do children typically get their father's name instead of the mother's? It would seem, to be consistent, that if the Jewish mother determines whether or not the child is Jewish, the child should carry her name, both as a last name and as the "son of..." or "daughter of..." formula when a Jew is called to the Torah or mentioned in any other liturgical context.

Our traditional Hebrew names are a perfect example of the male chauvinism of Judaism. For example, I am Yehiel Moshe ben Zindel; Zindel was my father's Hebrew name. If I had been given my mother's name, I would be Yehiel Moshe ben Sima. (This would suit me just fine. It would have annoyed the devil out of my father, but that's not a good enough reason.)

Many names were forced on those Jews who lived in the Pale of Settlement by the Czars, to be more consistent with the rest of their subjects, and those names often came from trades. There was Goldsmith, and Cantor, and names that began with Eisen—in Germany those who dealt with iron. Probably somewhere in my grandfather's background there was some one in the distilled spirits business, hence the name Bronfman; *bronfn* means schnapps in Yiddish. Since my grandfather had been a tobacco farmer in the Kishenev region before he came to Canada, it seems the link between trades and names was no longer relevant. Though who knows? Perhaps that trade-based family name did lead my grandfather or father into the schnapps business again.

The "Yehiel Moshe" came from my grandfather, and I got his name because I was my father's first-born son, and my grandfather had died. My sisters got the names of their grandmothers. Since my maternal grandfather was still alive, my younger brother just got a name of his own. I like the custom of naming children after deceased relatives, as it keeps the name alive. Perhaps a compromise might be that in Hebrew children would receive their mother's name, but in English that of their father. Thus when I would get an aliyah, I would be Yehiel Moshe ben Sima, and in English Edgar Bronfman. Sounds fair to me.

EDGAR M. BRONFMAN is Chairman of the International Board of Governors of Hillel: Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

METAMORPHOSIS

MATRONYMIC hernames/surnames

BY RABBI ADIN STEINSALTZ

In Jewish family names there are some phenomena that do not exist—or exist to only a very limited degree—in the family names of other peoples. One of these phenomena is specific to East European Jewish family names—or, to be even more precise, to family names in those parts of Eastern Europe that were under the rule of the Russian Empire: Russia, Belorussia, the Ukraine, and parts of Poland. The phenomenon is family names that are based on women's first names.

Many family names throughout the world are derived from first names. However, in most societies, they are patronymic—namely, expansions of fathers' names. These are all men's names: names of the heads of tribes, of families, and the like. Among Jewish family names, however, there are many names that are based on women's first names.

The use of women's names as the basis for family names is the outcome of a particular social situation that existed in Eastern Europe at the time when Jews, who were residents of the Russian Empire, were compelled to put family names in their formal papers. In 1804, an edict forced Jews to choose family names. In 1844, Jews also had to register in the city censuses. In addition, a law of 1850 forbade Jews to change their family names, even after converting to Christianity. Until that time, most Ashkenazi Jews had no family names (family names were much more common among Sephardi Jews, even as early as the Middle Ages). In their papers—both internal Jewish papers and papers destined for other purposes—they were called only by their private names and their fathers' names, sometimes with an additional appellation.

Once it became compulsory to choose family names, every family chose a different name for itself. Many of those names were chosen according to the family's profession or place of residence. Many names, however, were a formal fixation of existing nicknames, be it after the father or after a woman: sometimes the matriarch of the family, sometimes the wife or the mother-in-law.

The first instances of this phenomenon date back to the 16th Century: two of the leading sages of the generation in Poland had appellations based on women's names. The great Talmudic commentator, the Maharsha (1555-1631), whose full name was Rabbi Shmuel Eideles, was named after his mother-in-law, the rich woman Eidel, who generously supported him and his yeshiva for many years. The Talmudic commentator and Halakhic decisor, author of the book called *Bakh*, Rabbi Yool Sirkis (or Surkis), was called after a woman named Sarah. In a later generation, we find the mysterious Hassidic figure, Rabbi Leib Sara's, who was called so after his mother, Sara.

The reason for having family names based on the names of the women in the family has to do with a particular social structure that existed in many places in Eastern Europe. Many husbands—and not necessarily professionals, such as rabbis or ritual slaughterers—used to sit in houses of study and learn Torah, while the burden of providing the livelihood fell on the shoulders of their wives. Women would run shops or deal in commerce or trade, in addition to being homemakers and mothers. As a result, they were much more famous than their husbands, who were known only to a limited circle of friends. No wonder, then, that many men were called after their wives, for they were much more widely known. Therefore, when family names had to be chosen, they often were only slight variations (sometimes by adding a Slavic suffix) to nicknames by which they had been known previously. In the Austrian Empire, Jews had to choose from among a limited number of possible family names which, because of anti-Semitism, often were ugly and odious. The Jews of the Russian Empire, however, were given the freedom to select family names at will; thus, many old nicknames were preserved as formal family names.

Following is a partial list of family names based on women's names, along with the origin for that name.

Basevitz related to the woman Bat Sheva (according to the Lithuanian pronunciation)
Bashevis related to the woman Bat Sheva (according to the Ashkenazic pronunciation)
Bashkin related to the woman Batya (according to the Ashkenazic pronunciation in the Lithuanian dialect, whereby it is pronounced Bashi)
Baskin related to the woman Batya (according to the Ashkenazic pronunciation, in which this name is pronounced Basi)
Beilin related to the woman Beila
Beilis related to the woman Beila (Yiddish)
Belkin related to the woman Bela, Beila
Blumkin related to the woman Bluma
Breines related to the woman Bryna
Breinin related to the woman Bryna
Chaikin related to the woman Chaya
Chanes related to the woman Chana (Yiddish)
Chankin related to the woman Chana
Chavki related to the woman Chava
Chayke related to the woman Chaya (Yiddish)

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Chinkin related to the woman Chinka
Dorkin related to the woman Dvora (Yiddish)
Dvorkin related to the woman Dvora
Eidels related to the woman Eidel
Eidelson the son of Eidel (German)
Eidlin related to the woman Eidel
Elkin related to the woman Ella, Elka
Elkind the son of Ella (Yiddish)
Esterin related to the woman Ester
Esterman the husband of Esther (Yiddish-German)
Esterson the son of Esther (Yiddish-German)
Etkes related to the woman Etta (Yiddish)
Etkin related to the woman Etta
Etkins related to the woman Etta
Feigels related to the woman Feige
Feigelson related to the woman Feige
Feigin related to the woman Feige
Fredkin related to the woman Freide, Freda
Freidin related to the woman Freida
Freidlin related to the woman Freida (in the diminutive Freidl)
Genessin related to the woman Genesia (a common first name, prevailing mainly in Lithuania)
Genkin see Henkin
Gittelman the husband of Gittel (Yiddish)
Gittels related to the woman Gittel (Yiddish)
Gittelson the son of Gittel (Yiddish)
Gittlin related to the woman Gittel
Goldin related to the woman Golda
Goldis related to the woman Golda (Yiddish)
Henkin related to the woman Henya (in the Russian spelling: Genkin)
Itkin related to the woman Ita
Leahles related to the woman Leah
Lenkin related to the woman Lena
Malkes related to the woman Malka
Malkin related to the woman Malka
Margoles related to the woman Margalit (according to the Yiddish pronunciation)
Margolin related to the woman Margalit
Mechlin related to the woman Mechl, Michal
Mechlis related to the woman Mechl
Menuhin related to the woman Menuha
Merlin related to the woman Miriam (according to the diminutive Merl)
Mindlin related to the woman Mindl
Mirkin related to the woman Miriam (according to the diminutive Miri)
Mirlin related to the woman Miriam (according to the diminutive Mirl)
Mirls related to the woman Miriam (according to the diminutive Mirl)
Mushkin related to the woman Mushka (Mussia, in the Lithuanian pronunciation)
Nehamkes related to the woman Nehama
Nehamkin related to the woman Nehama
Perls related to the woman Perl
Rachelevsky related to the woman Rachel
Rachelson son of the woman Rachel
Reisin related to the woman Rosa
Riveles related to the woman Rivka
Rivkes related to the woman Rivka (Yiddish)
Rivkin related to the woman Rivka
Rivkind son of the woman Rivka
Rivlin related to the woman Rivka (in the diminutive Riva, Rivale)
Rochlin related to the woman Rachel (in the Polish pronunciation)
Roises related to the woman Roisa (in the Polish pronunciation)
Rosales related to the woman Rosa (according to the diminutive Rosale)
Rosin related to the woman Rosa
Ruchamkin related to the woman Ruchama
Sheinin related to the woman Sheine
Sheinis related to the woman Sheine
Sheinkin related to the woman Sheine
Shifrin related to the woman Shifra
Shoshkes related to the woman Shoshana (in the diminutive Shoshke)
Shprinzeles related to the woman Shprinza (in the diminutive Shprinzl)
Simkin related to the woman Sima
Sirkin related to the woman Sara
Sirkis related to the woman Sara
Shprinzak related to the woman Shprinza
Surkin related to the woman Sara (according to the Ashkenazi pronunciation)
Tamarin related to the woman Tamar
Tamarkin related to the woman Tamar
Tamarlin related to the woman Tamar (in the diminutive Tamarl)
Tamars related to the woman Tamar (Yiddish)
Temkin related to the woman Tema
Treinin related to the woman Treina
Tumarkin related to the woman Tamar (in the Polish pronunciation)
Zeitlin related to the woman Zeitl
Zeitls related to the woman Zeitl
Zeldes related to the woman Zelda
Zeldin related to the woman Zelda
Zipkin related to the woman Zipporah (in the diminutive Zipke)
Zippels related to the woman Zippel (diminutive of Zipporah)
Zirels related to the woman Zirel
Zirelson son of the woman Zirel (Yiddish)
Zirlin related to the woman Zirel
Zisslin related to the woman Zissel
Zlatkes related to the woman Zlate

RABBI ADIN STEINSALTZ is an author, historian and social critic whose translation of the Talmud into five modern languages has been called the most important Jewish publication of the 20th Century.

maverick matronymics

BY TAMAR NEWBERGER

As a little girl, I heard a lot about the Schottensteins. Now known for their go-figure underwriting of both a Talmud and the Ohio State football stadium, they'd made their fortune with an eponymous department store. My grandmother was a Schottenstein and, growing up, I would shamelessly drop the name in a knowing crowd and enjoy the gasps of recognition and admiration. My grandmother and I were proud to be part of the team—our own little Kennedys—even as our connection with the Schottenstein dynasty was gradually disappearing with each new generation.

As a teen, my attention turned to my own name. My grandmother Schottenstein had married a Newberger and had four grandchildren, only one of them a boy. I did my genealogical math. Unless he was going to have sons, the Newberger name—my name—would disappear. This potential loss nagged at me, but it never occurred to me that I myself could do anything to halt it.

As my political consciousness grew, so did my discomfort with our culture's default patrilineal naming scheme. Why were feminist mothers who kept their own names after marriage unquestioningly giving their children the father's last name—or, at least, why wasn't this at least a conversation the expectant parents were having? No one could defend this, but everyone bought into it. No one I knew was really second-guessing the status quo—and these were women and men who second-guessed everything. I wanted to do things a little differently.

My point was that both parents' names represent equally legitimate choices. I thought this choice should be made as routinely as women now decide whether to keep their maiden names after marriage. So, as my relationship with my then-boyfriend-now-husband grew more serious, I brought up what I assumed would be a delicate topic. Without missing a beat, he agreed that our child could have my last name. What an enlightened, sympathetic person!

But it turns out that naming is a family affair. In my seventh month of pregnancy, my wonderful in-laws and parents got wind of our plans and launched a full-frontal attack. My husband's parents understood the socio-political implications of our decision but nevertheless felt rejected by the thought that their grandchild would not carry their last name. There were intimations that my husband did not love his parents if he did not honor them by bestowing their surname on his progeny. His mother suggested that people would think her son "had no balls." (She was not responsive to the argument that, on the contrary, he would indeed be doing a very ballsy thing.) My husband began to suggest alternative options. One choice was to give our child a hyphenated combination of both of our last names. Never mind that Newberger-Schapiro would sound like

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a law firm; this fabricated name would actually be neither his nor my name. I felt confused and insulted that a name that belonged to nobody would have more legitimacy than my actual name. A more oddball suggestion was that we give our child my husband's last name on the birth certificate but then change it in several years if we were unhappy with the decision. I dissented.

My mother, ardent feminist and successful businesswoman, sided with my in-laws. She was concerned with keeping peace in the family, but she also thought this was a silly issue on which to make a grand statement. Confident that they would back me up, I challenged my mother to discuss the naming crisis with her closest friends—all ardent feminists. Shockingly, all of my mother's friends agreed with her! And, although it was his name which would be preserved, my father also advised against Newberger, even as he advocated for my right to make this decision.

Unexpectedly, my strongest backers came from the least likely quarter—the secretaries in my New Jersey office. High-school graduates, not particularly career-oriented, often still living with their parents and hoping to find a male executive to take them away from it all, they would give me pep talks and encourage me with "You go, Girl" high-fives. Stressed from my self-imposed ordeal, I wept it all out one day in my obstetrician's office. It turned out that the other female partner in the practice had given her last name to her children, with her husband's blessing. I wasn't a freak!

In the end, my husband and I reached a compromise. Our daughter would have my last name, but her middle name would be my husband's last name, with future children's names open for negotiation. (This is where I have to second-guess my own old fashioned ways. Shouldn't siblings have the same last names?).

Galia's birth announcement was a 4-generation family tree, complete with maiden names of her great-great grandparents. I hope she is a proud descendent of all 16.

TAMAR NEWBERGER is a sales and marketing director at a software company.

a paradox of jewish inheritance

BY DEBRA RUBIN

Before DNA testing, there was no way to prove paternity, so it was understandable that Judaism would be passed on through the maternal line. So why doesn't the transmission of status—whether you are one of the three "castes" of Judaism: Kohen, Levi or Yisrael—require the same certainty as the transmission of religion? A *kohen* (one descended from the priestly class with special duties in the Temple more than 2000 years ago) is always given the honor of the first aliyah during a Torah reading and gives the "priestly blessing" at a synagogue service.

But, strangely enough, though a Jewish identity passes from a mother to both her sons and her daughters, her priestly lineage, if she should be a *Bat* (daughter of a) *Kohen* ends with her. Only a father can pass along this Jewish status to his children, and only his sons may pass it along to their children. Why?

Forty years ago, my mother asked that same question. Her father was a kohen. When my brother was born, my mother took it upon herself to decide that she need not have a *pidyon ha'ben* for my brother, her first child. The "redemption of the first-born son" is a ceremony in which a first-born male, thought to belong to the priest or kohen, must be symbolically bought back from a member of the kohen caste or tribe. A kohen needn't be redeemed, and since she is a kohen, she decided, why shouldn't her son be one as well? No matter that my father is of the tribe of Yisrael.

So, by my mother's logic, I am a kohen too.

Should I ask for the first aliyah? ■

DEBRA RUBIN is editor of the Washington Jewish Week.

each of us has a name

Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents

Each of us has a name
given by our nature and our smile
and given by what we wear

Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls

Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbors

Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing

Each of us has a name
given by our enemies
and given by our love

Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work

Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness

Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given to
our death

Adaptation of a Hebrew poem
by Zelda, by MARCIA FALK
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The Book of Blessings (HarperCollins)

Malka in the Promised Land

A SHORT STORY BY DANYA RUTTENBERG

BELLA BARAN

Malka, bored in class while her teacher drones on about kashering pots and pans. She's vaguely aware that Rebbetzin Kraemer has written a blessing on the chalkboard, but her hand feels too heavy to drag pen across notebook. The air in the room is stiff.

Later, at lunch, she's off-sorts. It's Chicken Pattie day; the cafeteria-smell is fried, pungent. Light from the windows gives the binful of mayonnaise an eerie-white cast. Malka wonders if it would glow in the dark.

She's suddenly sick of wearing long sleeves. Jerusalem is already hot, but she hasn't worn short sleeves since she was eight years old, running through Prospect Park with her brothers. Obviously at seventeen that's not an option any more—it's much easier to imagine being eight again than to think of wearing short sleeves now.

She sits down on the bench at her table. Everything feels super-real, like the room has suddenly changed colors. Things seem wrong. Dvori is talking about the skirt she bought the day before in Tel Aviv. It's made of the same fabric as those new hip-hop pants. Tamara's passing around rugelach that her mother just mailed in a care package from Flatbush. Malka's a different color. She wants to reconnect the wires, but isn't sure how. Trying very hard to use normal-voice, she interrupts:

"Why do we do mitzvos?"

Everyone stares at her.

"What?"

"No, I mean really. Why?"

Sarah rolls her eyes, annoyed.

Everyone else is just puzzled.

Chaviva looks the most upset.

"Malka!" Chaviva can't keep the shock out of her voice. "You know. Because HaShem wants us to. Period." That last word sounded a little shaky.

Questions that have never existed suddenly fly from Malka's mouth. She's not aware of articulated thoughts riding from her brain to her larynx and out; it's as if they're born on her tongue and take flight before she even knows they're there.

"If HaShem hates idolatry, why doesn't He just wipe it out? If someone doesn't know they're Jewish, will they be punished for breaking Shabbos? Do devout Buddhists face Divine Judgement?"

Sarah's now officially pissed. "Shut *up* already!"

Tamara's always been the most patient. "Malka, you *know* the goyim aren't HaShem's concern. That He gave us His 613 Commandments to help bring *Olam Ha-Ba*, the world to come. And that HaShem rewards after death based on Torah, mitzvos and *gimilus*…"

"Acts of lovingkindness. I know." None of this is exactly news. But this time somehow it doesn't sound right.

Rochel pipes in. "Which is why you have to keep track of how many mitzvos you do."

"Shut up, Rochel! You don't count mitzvos like they're calories!"

"Yeah, she counts the calories more carefully."

"Whatever, Dvori. Like you're not gonna go puke your lunch in the bathroom as soon as we're done."

"Shut *up*!" Now Dvori's blushing, trying her best not to cry. "As if I'm the only one here who does that, whatever."

The conversation carries away, like a boat following the river. Malka, at the edge of the table, watches the water pipes

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on the ceiling. She'd never noticed them before. They're big and thick and dark: metal reeds, porters of secrets. Suddenly they're the most real things in the room. The talk of the women around her seems to rise and fade away, like music.

She's standing outside looking at a tree when Rabbi Goldfleish approaches. (Sarah and Dvori, under the pretense of being worried, had decided to rat Malka out.)

He stands close enough that his shadow falls across her line of vision. The tree is medium-sized. Its roots suckle the earth and pull life all the way up and then out through the leaves. Amazing. She can see it breathing; she can see a halo of energy pulsing out from the green, like a cloud. Almost like a pillar of smoke, but lighter somehow.

Rabbi Goldfleish clears his throat.

"Malka."

Now she turns her head.

"Oh. Hi."

"How are you doing?" He furrows his brow in concern. This is his cares-about-the-students-face.

"Okay." Perhaps this will send him away so she can look more at the tree.

"Really?" Brow-furrow. "Some of the girls have told me that you've had a few questions lately."

She shrugs.

More softly (concern-voice,) "Would you like to discuss them with me?"

"Not really." She's a bit puzzled. There's a man here with a close-cropped beard, a black suede yarmulke, a white shirt and black pants. All the men she knows wear the same clothes, though not all of them trim their beards. But the women all wear different clothes. This suddenly seems odd. She watches his mouth move open and closed, and tries to concentrate on the meanings of the words. They slide into the air and then evaporate: powdery sound.

"…and things we've been trying to teach you here at Midreshet Chayill. Your parents sent you here, to our Holy Land, to learn what it means to be a Jew, what it means to live a life of Torah and obeying HaShem's commandments. Are you finding your classes difficult, Malka?"

He's looking at her intently. He's just asked a question, it seems.

"No."

"Well, then, maybe they're too easy? Maybe we should move you out of the siddur class and into Rabbi Kellerman's ethics class? There's a lot to learn about the prayerbook, but if you'd like a change I could approve it. Of course you've got to stay in Practical Halakha; you're doing some very important work there. You'll need all of that learning when you're running your very own Jewish household, not so long from now."

He says these last words in a candy-tantalizing voice; this line of reasoning never fails to bring girls back.

This is the part where the girl sniffles, bucks up, and decides to go fix her hair before study group. Rabbi Goldfleish starts to feel relieved in anticipation of her response.

Malka looks at him. She doesn't say anything. This man, with his open-mouth-closing-mouth seems so silly and strange. She doesn't feel like talking. She walks away.

Rabbi Goldfleish, having already resolved the issue in his head, just stands there dumbly. It takes him a minute to realize that something different had just happened in real life.

Nighttime. Malka in pajamas puts on her sneakers and grabs a sweater. It's not really so late; there's a card game going on in the lounge and she can hear Shira talking loudly in half-Hebrew-half-English on the phone down the hall. The tile floor is a wide white sea, the stairs down push against her feet one-two one-two. Malka puts her keys in the pocket of her sweater and walks out.

The air is cool and long. Malka closes her eyes and inhales a sweet night lungful. A slow, low cricket-sound rises gently, dissipating as it lifts. She looks around for a moment, thinking about the bus; she could easily get on the rickety stark-lit 4-Aleph into town. Sit on its orange-brown seats, watch the city swim by. Hear time roll. Collect disapproving glances from *haredim* who don't believe that unmarried girls should wear pajamas on the bus.

She could probably get on the bus, walk around Ben Yehuda street, hear sounds and see people. There would be a few tourists, a lot of secular Israelis drinking beer. Laughter, lightness. And music! The klezmer guy playing for coins in Zion Square, and rows of jazz up on the Russian Compound. Even maybe a rock band. There would be blood pushing through capillaries, proteins broken down and absorbed, neurons exploding electric charges. Cells reproducing, millions at a time.

BELLA BARAN

Malka squats down to retrieve a long stick. She places her hand on the cool soil for a moment—she closes her eyes and feels the electron-hum of earth buzz into her skin and up. It's thick, sort of a

"You'll need all of that learning when you're running your very own Jewish household not so long from now..."

tickling flow. She concentrates on sending her own atoms downward in exchange.

Tamping the ground she stands, stick in hand, and walks to the side of the dormitory building. Holding the stick high in the air, posed on tip-toe, she catches the bottom rung of the fire escape and tugs. The ladder rattles down; Malka drops the stick and begins to climb. Sarah and Ayelet in the second floor window are wearing foamy green mud-masks and eating potato chips. They don't see her walk by or hike up the third floor ladder to the roof.

She sits down. From the top of the building she can see all the way north to the Old City. Against hidden floodlights the white old stones gleam like compressed clouds. They hover over the hills, almost in the sky.

Against the slick blueblack the tiny stars begin, imperceptibly, to quake. Malka opens her hands to them, feels the light flow into her veins and through. She does not know her own thoughts. Everything melts.

Malka rambles the hall while everyone else is in class. She hears Rebbetzin Kraemer ask, "Even before HaShem leads the Israelites into our Holy Land, He knows that they will sin. Why, then, does He bring them forth?"

Things glow: chalk-on-chalkboards, the checkered floor, Rabbi Baer's yarmulke while he talks. The fold-out table by the stairs. Posters for the Shavuos cheesecake-baking party. She thimbles airily until reaching the library and enters as if compelled by force. The books simmer and beckon.

She pulls out a tractate (only there as reference for the rabbis, not intended for the light-headed girls to study) and opens a page. "What is twilight? Said R. Tanhuma: [It is] like a drop of blood balanced on the edge of a sword; the drop divides itself up on either side of the edge—such is twilight." Malka for a moment becomes a drop of blood balanced on a sword. She reads, "it has been taught in the name of R. Joshua: The thickness of the sky is about two finger-breaths." Malka becomes two finger breadths.

She flips several pages. "A harp was hanging before David's window, and at night a northerly wind would blow, fanning it, and it would play of itself." Malka becomes a warm northerly wind: happy to bless, silvery and bringing-forth.

She arrives for Gemara in room 203. Malka's not actually in the class; only the advanced students who might become teachers are permitted to study the Talmud. Even they, though, don't learn these texts the way the boys at Yeshivat ha-Derech do, poring over each page line by line and arguing about the commentaries; Rabbi Mendel just explains the ideas.

She sits in the back and listens to the older girls talk.

"...and then she said, 'if he's going to the Rochevet's for Shabbos I'll just have to see if I can get invited somewhere else.' Can you even *believe* that?"

"Whatever, that's so not cool. Especially after what she said to me last week, y'know?"

"Hey, what are you wearing to Dina and Dovid's wedding? Do you know yet?"

"I don't know, but I think Aryeh Burg is gonna be there."

"No way! How come Dina didn't tell me that?"

Rabbi Mendel walks in, sits down, and opens his book.

"Which is greater," he asks, "learning Torah or doing mitzvos?" Without pausing—and clearly disinterested in the class' opinions—he answers. "Rabbi Eleazar Ben Azariah says in Avot of Rabbi Nathan chapter 22, 'If there is no learning in Torah there is no proper conduct. If there is no proper conduct, there is no learning in Torah. As it is quoted in Jeremiah 17:8, 'He shall be...."

Nobody is paying attention.

Malka watches the lips twist in different shapes. Their motion is attached to the expulsion of words: they spin and fly, coasting on wings. She wonders if she can maybe hear them tinkle. She giggles inwardly.

The woman behind her begins to whisper to the woman on her left about Aryeh Burg.

Rabbi Mendel intones: "...neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' There is in fact a later parable from the Baal Shem Tov concerning the same principle. That is, if there is thick ice which later becomes thin, the rivers may overcome the ice and flow over it, but the ice remains firm. If, however, the ice is thin, and not firm, it follows that the ice was not strong to begin with...."

Something in the room shatters, but none of the enrolled students hear. They don't notice that Malka has flowered out from her seat and, as though she were not a full-sized human at all, as though she were a hologram or a strange evaporation—a cartoon beyond rules—jumped into the viscous pages of book. That as they gossip she pulses among the letters, swims through and among the pulp bounded only by neat rows of ink telling stories. That she has become four cubits of consecration: black fire on white fire. Rabbi Mendel himself does not see the book radiate a strange unearthly warmth. Inside the legal volume Malka cartwheels and slides, climbs from taxation and stolen candles to the bracha for rainbows. She swings from the words as if they were tree-limbs in the park.

The classroom is empty by the time Malka returns. While she hurricaned with Babylonian sages they moved on to another class, or to dinner. Rabbi Mendel left the tractate behind, on the desk; she does not know why and it does not matter. Things glow and the alphabet spills dripping from her lips. When she touches her hand to the mezzuzah on the doorframe, something begins to lift. ■

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LilithFiction

POLAR REGION

A SHORT STORY BY ERIKA DREIFUS

All the articles and handbooks agree. *BY NO MEANS SHOULD YOUR HOME BE PRISTINE.* A child adds clutter to any environment, they explain. Far better to show the social worker coming over for the home study that the mess won't bother you. But today has been a day of Ajax and Fantastik and fluffy, fresh-from-the-dryer bathroom towels nevertheless. Please, God, let this work. May Ms. Sawyer see the smoke alarms. May she commend the carbon monoxide monitor. May she linger over the list of emergency numbers posted by the phone in the kitchen.

"We *want* to give these children families, Ms. Freiburg," she assured me when we last met, at the It's a Small World, Inc., offices a few blocks up on Madison. "We *want* to see them in safe, healthy homes."

In the living room I refold the afghan Bubbe Irma knitted when I started college, the afghan that followed me to the med school dorm and then, when I quit med school, to the studio where I spent those first years trying to be a writer. Science writer. From the side table teak-framed snapshots smile. Scenes from my grandfather's last birthday party. My college graduation—a decade ago. Far more recent, and cuter, shots of my brother's new baby, asleep.

The engagement picture, alas, has been eliminated.

Is that dust? I almost run for a sponge and then, wiping the surfaces clean, I review the items strategically placed on the coffee table. The book of English countryside scenes, "to add calm and freshness," my best friend advised. The American Paintings catalog from the Met--good, solid patriotic values.

A small ceramic bowl filled with peppermint candies. And, after much debate, a copy of *Secret Sadness*, the book that grew out of my magazine series on a Connecticut family's intergenerational battle with bipolar disorder.

"It did get excellent reviews," my friend pointed out.

"WITH YOUR HISTORY, WILL ANY AGENCY GIVE YOU A CHILD?"

The intercom buzzes. I want to throw up. But the elevator chugs right on to its stop and Ms. Sawyer emerges. She's perhaps four or five years older than I am. But she's also no more than a size 6. And *she* wears a wedding ring.

Start things off right with a firm handshake and a smile, counsels "How to Survive the Home Study," the article my ex-fiancé and I bookmarked on the Web at the beginning of this quest. That I have read at least two hundred times.

"How nice to see you again," she says.

Sure, it's nice. The Home Study is costing me $1500.

She settles in the purple chair everyone loves. I perch on the edge of the sofa. Smooth the afghan again. She removes a folder from her briefcase and tests a pen. Red ink.

She adjusts her eyeglasses and surveys the room. "This is a lovely apartment. Have you always lived on the Upper East Side?"

Is that bad? She wants me to explain why I live here. What are my neighbors like? Where will the child go to school? Where is the nearest hospital?

She flips through pages and pages of documents. "We do have quite a bit in your record already. Let's see. Grew up in Scarsdale. Princeton. Columbia, for journalism." She pauses. "You teach writing, too, don't you?"

"Yes. Very flexible schedule. Excellent for child care."

She smiles. "And we have here the statement from your bank. Fine. The police verification—as expected. And the letter from Dr.—"

"Sussman. My internist."

She nods. "Well, we didn't really expect you to have tuberculosis now, did we?"

I laugh weakly. No. No tuberculosis.

"And of course I do know why you and your—why you and Mr. Paltzman wanted to adopt. I've encountered other couples who have made similar decisions. The genetic risks—" She makes a pitying sound. "I might add that given the time it takes, it wasn't such a bad idea to begin seeking information before your wed—when you did. I must ask again, however." Here she shifts in the chair. "Where are you in terms of resolving your feelings for Mr. Paltzman? You can understand, of course, the concern that you might really be seeking a child as a kind of—"

"Substitute."

She nods.

I assure her that I would never try to duplicate that bastard, or "Mr. Paltzman," as I more politely refer to him. Never ever ever. Ever.

For some reason she doesn't appear completely comforted by that answer. So I tell her quite plainly that I don't see a child as a substitute for him, or for any husband-fiancé-boyfriend-whatever. I've always intended to be a mother.

She writes a few more lines. Then she asks, "Could I have a glass of water, please, Ms. Freiburg?"

"Of course, of course." Leap up from my perch. "Are you sure you only want water? I have wi—I mean, I have soda, and coffee. And something to eat?" *Be sure to offer refreshments—such a gesture demonstrates your nurturing qualities.*

No, she really wants just a glass of water. When I return from the kitchen, shaking a little, she's flipping through *Secret Sadness*.

"This was quite a book. I remember the magazine articles."

I hand her the glass and a coaster and continue to smile. "Thank you."

"You really got to the heart of the issue. How bipolar disorder—or any mental illness, really—can affect an entire family." She sips the water. "What made you interested in that story? I remember thinking, at the time, and of course I didn't know you at all then, that this writer had a personal investment in her subject."

Don't have to tell her a thing. Just concentrate on the Americans With Disabilities Act. My brother looked into it again after his latest clash with his boss in San Francisco, and while he was at it he found out that private agencies, like the

one Ms. Sawyer works for, are covered under Title III.

Aaron had explained it quite well. "So they aren't supposed to screen you out on the basis of your so-called 'disability'."

"Unless I pose a 'direct threat' to the health and safety of others, right?"

Over the phone I'd imagined him closing his eyes. We have the same dark brown eyes. We're twins, actually.

"Like to a child?" I'd pressed.

He hadn't answered that, and I couldn't blame him.

"Well, let's move on." Ms. Sawyer takes up her pen. "Your book deals with mental health issues. Are you prepared for *all* the challenges, physical and emotional, that so many of these children coming from abroad bring with them?"

"Yes, I really think I am."

Then she wants to know about "basic disciplinary issues." How I would handle a child's tantrum in a supermarket? A refusal to do his homework? Breaking curfew?

It's as if I'm six years old and playing hopscotch. Darting from answer to answer. Two-footed on some. Less sure on others. Where will the stone land next?

She says she's a little concerned about the issue of "support." Since I'll be a single parent, and all.

I pick up the picture of Aaron's new baby. Tell Ms. Sawyer how close Aaron and I have always been, tell her how I spent the first two weeks of little Jamie's life out in San Francisco.

I do not mention that little Jamie did not stop crying from the instant he was placed in my arms to the second Aaron took him back.

"I seem to recall that your parents are still alive?" Ms. Sawyer checks her notes.

"Yes." My voice cracks.

She looks up.

"They've just been very busy—my grandmother is very elderly and, well, you know, she needs a lot of their time."

As do the phone calls ten thousand times a day trying to convince me what a terrible idea "this adoption business" is.

"Shouldn't you at least reconsider?" Mom says.

Dad isn't even that diplomatic. "I hate to say it, but with your history, will an agency even give you a child?"

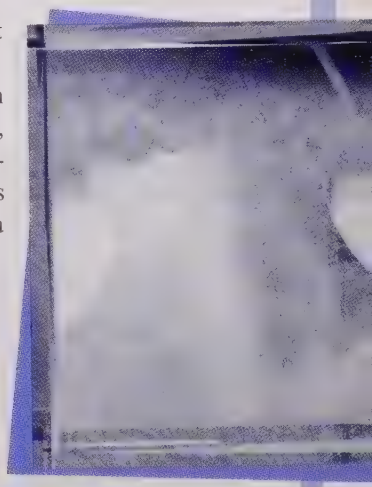
They'd held back before, they explain, again and again, when Glenn was in the picture. Because they felt more secure about his "steadying influence." Then, too, they had felt somewhat responsible, since Glenn and I began looking into adoption because our pre-marital screening—we're Ashkenazic, after all—showed that we were both Tay-Sachs carriers. And while Glenn was willing to play genetic Russian roulette, I wasn't.

There was the small matter, too, of weaning myself off my daily regimen to avoid further stacking the biological deck against any potential child, to save it from the "teratogenicity" that strikes pregnant rats and mice administered the same chemicals streaming through my own brain and blood every day. But those chemicals also form a "steadying influence." Right? Just take a look at people who go off *their* meds and drown five children in bathtubs to figure that one out.

"It's too much for a child to deal with," Mom says. "I know that." Then there's a deep silence, while we think of her childhood, and Bubbe Irma's battles. The hospitalizations. The medications. The silences. It was bad enough, back then, to be Divorced. How much worse, to be Depressed, at times, too.

"You're being very selfish," Dad tells me, repeatedly. "I'm very surprised."

"Still?" One might surmise that the shock would wear off, somewhere around the twelve thousandth enunciation of this line.



"You should think about what Glenn said," Mom urges.

Because, naturally, I've forgotten all about it. Anyone would. It's a snap, to erase from memory the "discussion" in which your fiancé dumps you. Especially when you visit a therapist three times each week.

"Hurtful as it may be," Mom continues. "If he, an adult, had so much trouble dealing with your moods—how can you expect a child…?"

And so it goes.

Ms. Sawyer sets her glass on the coaster and stuffs her file back in her case. "I'll just take a look around here for a few minutes, if that's all right," she says.

It's all right. Medicine cabinets included.

Weeks pass. The employers and teachers listed as references tell me when she contacts them. My best friend introduces me to a lawyer she and her boyfriend met at the boyfriend's fifteenth college reunion. After the few miserable blind dates I've made myself endure post-Glenn—I'm still trying to decide whether they were equally or more unbearable than the "Friday Night for Singles!" evenings at the Jewish Museum and the 92nd Street Y—Josh's love for French movies, his antipathy toward household pets, his laugh, his intellectual quickness, and—yes, I confess—his looks and more intimate charms, which are also no one else's business—cheer me immensely.

And then Ms. Sawyer summons me to the office.

"I have something for you." She opens an envelope and removes a photograph.

It's him. Joseph Freiburg. Grandpa's namesake.

I have to sit down. Hold the photo in both hands.

My little boy.

"He's seven months old," Ms. Sawyer says. "And as far as we can tell, he has no serious health problems."

Pale baby. But that face! Rounder, fleshier than I expected. Even the hint of a double chin. His little ears stick out. Like his cousin Jamie's, actually.

"But he's not smiling." I look up. "Why isn't he smiling?"

"We don't usually see pictures of smiling babies until they've been here some time."

Not only isn't he smiling. His eyes are dark. Dark blue, but dark in mood, too. His eyebrows seem drawn together like a worried old man's. It doesn't help that the bit of hair he

has is pale, pale blond. The eyes dominate. But he's beautiful. And he's mine.

Weeks more pass, and one day, the phone finally rings again.

"It's Patricia Sawyer, Ms. Freiburg. I was hoping you might be able to come by my office sometime today. Two o'clock, perhaps?"

I look over to the side table, to the picture of Joey in its teak frame. "Is something wrong with the baby?"

"There's just something we need to discuss," she answers. "Is two o'clock convenient?"

Two is fine. But if she had good news, wouldn't she say so? Wouldn't she say, "Pack your bags, you're going to Russia!"

Daniel going into the lion's den. Danielle. Amy Freiburg. Whatever. That this meeting isn't going to be happy is obvious the second I walk in and see *Secret Sadness* on her desk.

She closes the door. "Thanks for coming."

"Sure," I manage.

She returns to her desk, settles in her brown leather chair. Behind her the faces of dozens of children smile. Joey's should join them, soon.

She adjusts her eyeglasses and reaches for the book. "I reread this." She flips through the pages. "I must say, I was even more impressed, this time. The critics were right."

It takes enormous effort but I unclench my teeth. "Thank you."

"I told my husband—." She glances at me. "I said to him, "'Bill, don't you think it's hard to imagine someone being able to write like this, with such sensitivity, without some personal experience?' He thought it was."

What a guy.

Silence is still the best policy.

"Perhaps not exactly with the ups and downs of bipolar disorder, specifically," she concedes. "But some sort of mood instability." She pushes the book a few inches away. Toward me.

"I'm sure you're familiar with the subject of 'wrongful adoption' cases."

I nod. Josh was good enough to fill me in on that. My own father's a lawyer, but it isn't as if he has been exactly helpful in this process. For that matter, my mom's a social worker. But she works with the elderly. "You should know about these cases," Josh said, "where adoptive parents sue agencies for failing to disclose information about a child's background, particularly medical background."

She leans back in her chair. "What people know less about, because cases usually don't reach litigation, are situations where adoptees seek damages for 'wrongful placement.'"

Wrongful placement.

"Those are situations," she continues, "when the adoptees come back to an agency and say, 'Look, you were remiss in placing me because you knew—or should have known—of a problem with the parents.' You can understand why the agencies might be extra careful. But it isn't just the agency's liability," she adds, leaning forward now, biting her lip, probably because I'm staring at her in a very unpleasant way. "It's really, very much, very much, the issue of the child's best interest."

Her hand grazes *Secret Sadness* as she reaches for another, very slim volume.

"Are you familiar with the Uniform Adoption Act?"

I shake my head. I can hear Josh defending himself already: "Look, Amy, I told you, this isn't my specialty."

She explains that while New York has not yet ratified it, there's still a provision she thinks I should know about. She rummages until she finds something and it seems she's almost about to read aloud. Then she hands the book to me.

She has stuck a pale green post-it on *Section 7-105. Failure to Disclose Information.* And highlighted *subsection (d) A prospective adoptive parent who knowingly fails to furnish information or knowingly furnishes false information to an evaluator preparing an evaluation pursuant to [Article] 2, [Part] 2 or [Article] 3, [Part] 6, with the intent to deceive the evaluator, is guilty of a [misdemeanor] [punishable upon conviction by a fine of not more than $] or imprisonment for not more than [ ], or both].*

There must be no blood left in my face. I hand the text back. "I'm not a lawyer."

"No." She keeps her gaze fixed on me. "But you're a very intelligent woman."

For what seems a very long time we sit in silence. At any moment she may grin and shout, "Checkmate!"

"Of course, we do still have all of Mr. Paltzman's information on file," she says. Now she isn't looking at me. She holds her red pen, stabs it against a legal pad. Her desk lamp glints off her rings. Stab-glint. Stab-glint. "I could give him a call, ask him a few questions."

Checkmate. No grin.

I wait until she looks at me again. The pen stills. She twists her wedding ring instead.

"But I take it that won't be necessary." She's issuing a question-statement.

"No." That won't be necessary.

"Is there anything else?" she asks. "Anything you want to talk about? Anything I can do for you now?" Her voice surprises me in its gentleness. She hands me a box of tissues. "Amy?"

Eventually my throat opens, and my eyes can meet hers.

"The picture," I say. "May I keep it?" ■

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כתב עת פמיניסטי

נוגה

This page highlights **Noga**, Israel's Hebrew-language feminist journal which has been publishing for more than 20 years. It is edited by **Rachel Ostrowitz, Mira Ariel, Rachel Giora, Erela Daor** and **Miri Krasin** and funded by **US/Israel Women to Women**. Lilith believes it's important to hear about Israeli women's views directly from their own feminist publication. From Noga's Summer 2002 issue, #41, summarized and translated by **Naomi Danis**.

REFUSAL, COVER ART BY MICHAL BONANO

REFUSING TO BE ENEMIES: FEMINISTS IN THE GREAT WAR

Just as war is identified with "brotherhood," so, writes **Amira Gelblum**, have women used their "sisterhood" to oppose it. Women saw opposition to World War I as integral to their feminism. Feminists demanded to have their voices heard on questions of peace and war, and went beyond the traditional role of women in wartime: uncomplainingly sacrificing their sons and husbands, maintaining the home front, giving birth to and raising cannon fodder for the next war, taking on extra responsibilities and relinquishing them the moment the soldiers return home. The author shares the strategies of the World Congress of Women for Peace in 1915 and gives thumbnail portraits of activists.

SEX AND THE CITY: A CRITIQUE

Every few years an American television series comes along that reflects cultural changes of that era. They say "Sex and the City" is such a cultural signpost today, but **Yael Hacohen and Noa Shuval** don't agree.

It's clear why this series which brings the female orgasm to prime time arouses this revolutionary expectation—it focuses on the sexuality of the single woman and assumes that women are interested in sex, and talk about sex no less than men.

"Sex and the City" deals with the lives of four single women friends in their 30s who live in New York—all are white, thin and success-oriented. Each episode is built around a central question that Carrie, the main character, is researching for her weekly column about relationships between the sexes in New York.

In each episode the heroines meet and discuss the topic of the week creating the illusion of the development of independent thinking about female sexuality, not dictated by a reaction to male sexuality.

And yet, for example, when Carrie asks her friends if women can have sex like men Charlotte, the Puritan among them, asks if she means using a dildo. Samantha, the one who loves sex the most says, "No, that would mean having sex without feelings." Both attitudes are identical in assuming that active female sexuality is not possible without male attributes, biological (a physical phallus) or gender (lack of feeling). Alternative options for active female sexuality are not offered.

Though the heroines have money, attractive looks and social status their power is neutralized in the face of masculine power which is always stronger.

Carrie falls in love with the male archetype "Big," who is rich, older and an enigma. At the end of the first episode Big collects Carrie who is stuck on the street with no way to get home, a classic example of the knight in shining armor rescuing a maiden in distress. On horseback (in the limousine) Big explains to her that she thinks she can have sex like a man only because she has never really been in love—the ultimate putdown.

The only character in the series who (perhaps) tries to subvert the familiar dichotomy is Miranda, who doesn't rule out males with a lower status. And she chooses to keep her relative power in relation to them. However, because Miranda is "not willing to compromise," she is punished. In the third episode her work partner mistakenly assumes she's a lesbian. There is no place for active female heterosexuality.

The high expectations for the series don't materialize. Mostly we see Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha in classic "single women" preoccupation—with their girlfriends, in hunting grounds where they catch men, or shopping for designer shoes. Hacohen and Shuval's advice: Consider purchasing one pair of comfortable shoes.

GLOBALIZATION AND WORK IMMIGRATION IN ISRAEL

Adriana Camp discusses the long-term implications of short-term decisions made in the 90s by the Israeli government: Laborers were imported from overseas to do "dirty, dangerous, difficult" work that in the past had often been done by Palestinians. The government acted as if it could import labor without importing immigrants and has neglected the human rights of these workers and its responsibility to help them. "Indeed," writes Camp, "it is the impossibility of making this separation that locates the story of importing labor at the eye of the political storms in a large part of the Western world in the last fifty years."

Subscriptions to Noga are $40 for four issues airmail; $30 surface mail; in Israel 120 NIS.
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Are We Here Yet?

To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism, edited by Rebecca Walker, Anchor Books, $14

Listen Up: Voices From The Next Feminist Generation, edited by Barbara Findlen, Seal Feminist Publications, $16.96

Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism, edited by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, Drake Press $17.95

Adios Barbie: Young Women Write About Body Image and Identity, edited by Ophira Edut, Seal Feminist Press, $14.95

Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future, by Jennifer Baumgartner and Amy Richards, Farrar Strauss & Giroux, $15

Colonize This!: Young Women of Color On Today's Feminism, edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, Seal Feminist Press, $16.95

How many **Jewish women** writing was it **going to take** for me to **really feel** as though **I was invited** to this party?

Exactly what Third Wave writing covers is as undefined as third wave feminism itself. Let us look at what has been identified generally as the canon—those books routinely taught in women's studies classes as third wave writing, and the books being read in informal groups. So, Jewish women. Are we here yet? Are we included? Do we get a voice? What's being said about us?

To Be Real includes three pieces by Jewish writers, but none from a Jewish cultural perspective. *Listen Up* includes a piece by Robin Neidorf entitled, "Two Jews, Three Opinions," and "It's A Big Fat Revolution" by Nomy Lamm, who, without focusing on specific Jewish issues clearly identifies herself as a Jewish woman. *Third Wave Agenda*'s sole nod to Jewish women is an essay by Tali Edut, a Jewish Israeli-American who discusses her activist publishing work, done with her sister and Dyann Logwood, a black woman who, together with the Eduts, founded a feminist magazine. (Had the magazine, HUES, not been a critical hit, I doubt that a story of Jewish and black women working together on body issues would have made it into *Third Wave Agenda*, which has for the most part a white, suburban-raised tone.)

Probably the most Jewish-friendly of the early anthologies is *Adios Barbie*, edited by Ophira Edut, Tali's sister—not surprising, since it's the only one edited by a woman who herself writes explicitly as a Jew. It includes "My Jewish Nose," an essay by Lisa Jervis (editor of Bitch magazine) about her family's standing offer to pay for a nose job, and her reasons for keeping her own nose. And Diane Feit's "Destination 120" discusses losing weight in the context of her plans for a traditional Jewish wedding where, she explains, "despite my cousins' having no difficulty lifting me on a chair during *Hava Nagila*," she still wondered if she should have lost another 10 pounds.

So there *are* Jewish women writing for these collections. Considering the desire of the editors to get as broad a range of perspectives as possible, I wondered if my feeling underrepresented in these books was unjustified. I did feel excluded, as though there were very few people "like me" in these anthologies. The excitement I felt when Nomy Lamm calls herself a *zaftikeh moid*—proving that someone else out there grew up with 50 words of Yiddish and the contradictions that lie between the old-country approval of *zaftig* and the American stigma of *fat*—underscored that. How many Jewish women, writing on specifically Jewish topics, was it going to take for me to really feel as though I was invited to this party?

The identity of the Third Wave, as I understand it, has been partially based on the idea that feminism has absorbed the lessons of multiculturalism, and that we have overcome being the "white women's movement" of the Second Wave boomers. (This interpretation is not universal. Baumgartner and Richards, for example, in *Manifesta*, present a glossy view of the history of American feminism in which no racial tension is ever mentioned.)

I found the apparently unconscious language of some of the white essayists troubling, with its assumption that their experience was the norm. "Your Life as A Girl," an essay by Curtis Sittenfeld which appears in *Listen Up*, is an account of a young woman at boarding school slowly being conditioned to expect less as a woman. It is the only piece in the anthology written in the second person, and I found it disturbing. Presumably the author is speaking to herself, and yet the point, clearly, is that this is *your* life as a girl

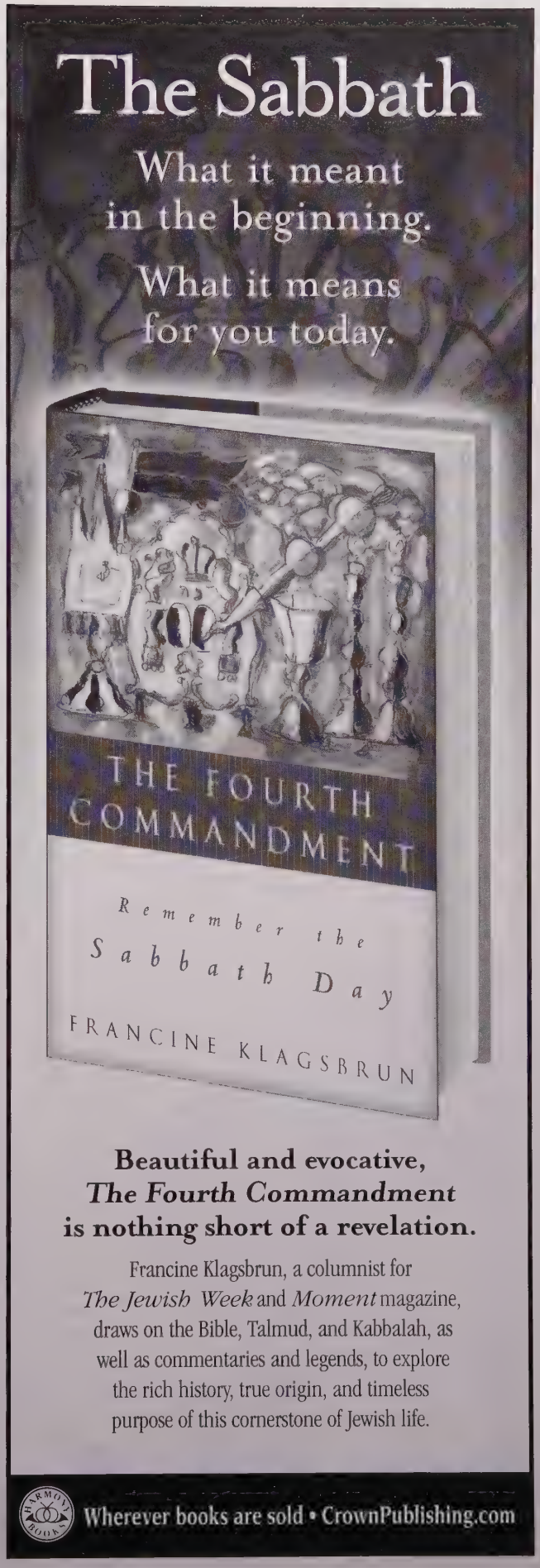
too. Which for me it is not. I couldn't imagine that an essay of my own, or of an Italian woman from Los Angeles I went to college with, or of one of the Vietnamese women I went to high school with, being published under such a sweeping rubric of entitlement. Similarly, in *Third Wave Agenda*, editors Heywood and Drake collaborate on a piece called "We Learn America Like A Script: Activism In The Third Wave; or Enough Phantoms of Nothing." While placing themselves in a specific suburban white cultural context, Heywood and Drake still write as though their experience is the normative one of our shared generation. "We learned this," they write, "as we began to learn about all the American histories...we had never before learned. Remember hearing about the Japanese internment camps for the first time? the Chinese exclusion act?...the treatment of Mexican migrant workers in the United States? Remember bringing this shit home? How could you begin to narrate these ineffable events, racking your town, your family and your body?"

And I have to say *no*, once again, *this isn't my life as a girl. I don't remember learning this, because I don't remember not knowing*. This is an experience I've heard recounted by classmates and friends from backgrounds like Heywood's and Drake's, but I grew up in an ethnic community with its own recent "ineffable" events, and I went to school with the children and grandchildren of the events they discuss learning of. I don't remember learning about the Japanese-American internment for the first time. I do remember, though, that we were reading books about it in elementary school. I grew up in a mixed ethnic community, in an urban center, and that makes an enormous difference to my feminist perspective.

Manifesta solidified my increasing feeling that Jewish women, and women from white ethnic or urban backgrounds were being ignored in the Third Wave's writing. *Manifesta* drew fire, justly, for largely ignoring women of color in their 400-page statement on young women and the future of feminism. Jewish women are similarly invisible, as are urban women, working-class women, and anyone with an ethnic or religious identity.

I grew up in a **mixed** ethnic community, **in an urban center**, and **that** makes an **enormous difference** to my **feminist** [illegible]

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire does make it onto *Manifesta*'s feminist timeline, but they refer to it as "alerting people to the conditions of factory workers, most of whom are immigrant women." Given their propensity elsewhere for finding cool chicks in history, it seems strange that they can't say *Jewish*, they can't say *Italian*, and they can't say *Clara Lemlich* or *Rose Schneiderman*, leaving the impression that the 19th-century suffragists they've been discussing up to this point came downtown to clean up the garment industry for the nameless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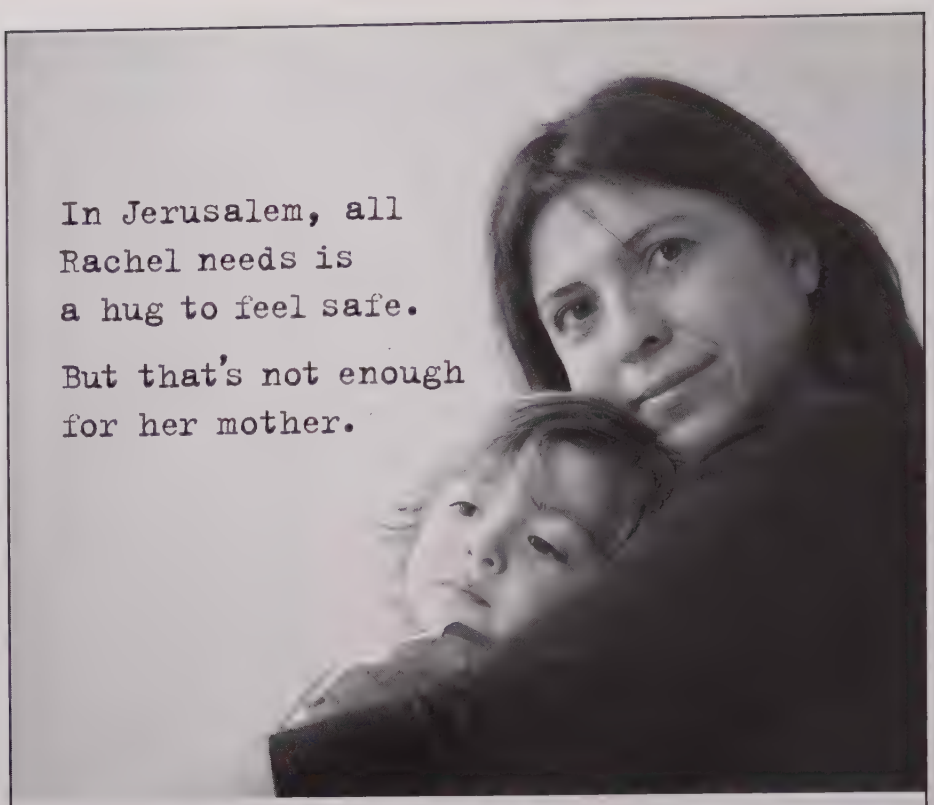

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immigrants. While Helen Gurley Brown's birth gets a mention, the history of women in the labor movement as a whole is practically erased. Margaret Sanger is named, Emma Goldman is not. Ernestine Rose is not. And there is no mention of what might be called "Jewish feminism" anywhere in the book.

Reading essays written by women of color addressing these ideas, I realized how natural it had been for me to make excuses for the lack of Jewish representation in these books, and to reflect the blame back on Jewish women. *Maybe most Jewish women don't write from a cultural context, maybe we're "just" white girls, maybe I should get over this nose-counting business*. I was inspired to see myself in these confident angry women, to assert my own observation and needs. At the same time, I couldn't help noticing that *Colonize This!* had exactly one Jewish contributor, and that Siobhan Brooks' piece, "Black Feminism In Everyday Life," described Jewish women's attempts to discuss their issues around nose jobs and Jewish identity issues in a women's studies class as a "symbolic form of violence" against black women, since Jewish women can "pass for white, while we cannot." I threw up my hands. After decades of hard discussion on many fronts about what it means to "pass," Jewish women are still drawn as racists when we talk about what it means to be asked to disappear. And while many of us can pass...silent Jewish women attending classes where *Manifesta* is the last word on the Third Wave...we still can't demand to be included in the story (or the *Manifesta* timeline). The whole message of *Colonize This!* appears to be that passing and blending in is *not* desirable, that a feminist has a right to her whole personal and cultural identity. Regardless of Brooks' contempt for Jewish women who attempt to do so, I think it's a right-on statement.

Are we here yet? A little bit. Do we have a long way to go? Oh yes, we do. Despite my frustration with the limited representation Jewish women have so far in third wave writing, I'm impressed with those of us who've made it up to bat. Further, with the publication of work such as *Yentl's Revenge* (edited by Danya Ruttenberg, reviewed in Lilith, Winter 2001) we're beginning to create forums for expressing Jewish feminism that will hopefully begin to work their way into mainstream Third-Wave dialogues. This is a challenge: first to define what we need and that we're not getting it, and to look for models that will help us assert ourselves. Looking back at Second Wave-era Jewish feminist writing, I see that we've been tackling this one for a while. Our efforts must build, consciously, on what's already been said.

—CHARLOTTE GREEN HONIGMAN-SMITH

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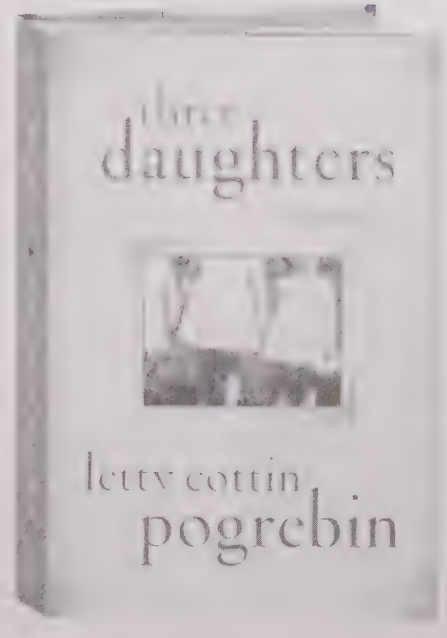

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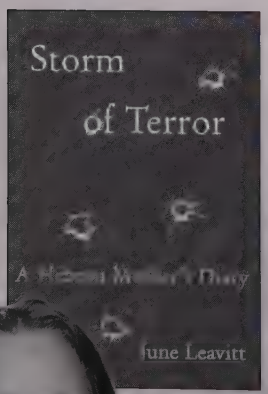
Storm of Terror, A Hebron Mother's Diary
by June Leavitt, Ivan R. Dee, $22.50
The Settlers (film)
by Ruth Walk, First Run/Icarus Films 2002
Welcome to Heavenly Heights
by Risa Miller, St. Martin's Press, $23.95

Jewish settlers who make their homes in the territories conquered by Israel in the Six Day War live in the eye of the Palestinian/Israeli storm, yet their own voices are but rarely heard. A new memoir, novel and documentary film have gone far toward filling that silence.

June Leavitt, author of *Storm of Terror*, is an American Jewish woman who grew up in secular, upper middle class Long Island, left for the University of Wisconsin with a trunk full of new mix n' match clothes, then found herself floundering into the drug culture. Today she is an ultra-Orthodox mother of five who lives with her husband and children in the Jewish enclave of Kiriat Arba near the West Bank Palestinian city of Hebron.

Storm of Terror is the intensely personal diary of her life during the first year and a half of the new Intifada which erupted in October 2000. Passionately convinced of the Jews' historic right to live in the whole biblical Israel, the author relates the relentless chronology of trauma and death in which neighbors and friends in her tight-knit community have been attacked in fields, cars, busses, and in their own beds.

In Leavitt's powerful honest narrative she agonizes about watching her own children on the firing line: "[My daughter] said that at school her friends are busy writing their own eulogies…Whoever says they are not frightened is telling a lie." She reveals herself not only as a determined ideologue but as a complex struggling human being.



As a child of the 60s Leavitt avails herself of yoga, bioenergy healing, meditation and even tarot cards in her quest for equanimity in the midst of horror. Yet she is candidly on the extreme fringe of the Israeli political spectrum, describing with almost utopian nostalgia the friendships between her children and nearby Arab families before the peace process "put up barbed wire between us and the Arabs."

Even more extreme are the handful of Jewish families who live in the Tel-Rumeida quarter in the very heart of Hebron. *The Settlers*, a documentary film directed by Ruth Walk, achieves an intimate portrait of these hard-line zealots seemingly oblivious to the 120,000 Palestinians who surround them. This compelling documentary shot over three years from 1999 into the Intifada makes no editorial comment, but shows how beside each settler Israeli soldiers guard and protect their every step.

Most telling are fervent religious celebrations held on the eerily empty streets of Hebron, when the Arabs are all locked away in their homes by an army curfew imposed so that the Jews may dance in the streets.

Even when bullets penetrate their children's bedrooms, the mothers are adamant to stay put, viewing themselves as the moral phalanx of the Jewish struggle. On a hilltop they lead their toddlers in reciting the Psalms of David amidst the background rumble of war.

Risa Miller's picaresque novel *Welcome to Heavenly Heights* tracks an Orthodox woman who gives up her suburban American life to move with her family to a fictional settlement on the West Bank. Were it not for its political setting, the novel could be an examination of the disorientation met by any uprooted immigrant. But Miller's heroine has to contend with the paradox of being expected to feel at home in a strange new society where even the ingredients of children's lunches and the way to mop floors take getting used to. Miller's eye for Israeli details and sharp character observation weave a wry tale about displacement and belonging.

None of the settlers in these works ever questions the importance of her life choice or the righteousness of her mission, a mission to which she commits both heart and flesh. Neither the books nor the film will change anyone's assessment of whether to label these driven people as courageous heroes or pernicious villains. But by demystifying settlers, they deepen understanding of the determination and fervor which makes them tick.

—HELEN SCHARY MOTRO

In Sickness & In Health: A Love Story
by Karen Propp, Rodale Press, $23.95

In our current exhibitionist culture, in which "telling all," and the squirt of fame it might bring, trumps old-fashioned dignity and that sacred thing that we once called "privacy," Karen Propp somehow manages to create a shocking page-turner by doing just the opposite: writing about a deeply private thing — her husband's indelicate fight with prostate cancer and their ultimately vain struggle as a couple towards trying to redeem some fragment of a sex life — with breathtaking integrity and modesty. Propp's attentions are

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Rachel Lev

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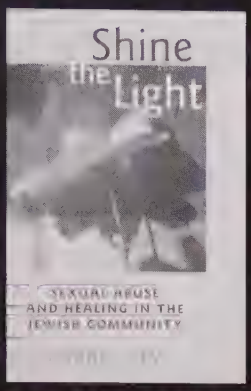

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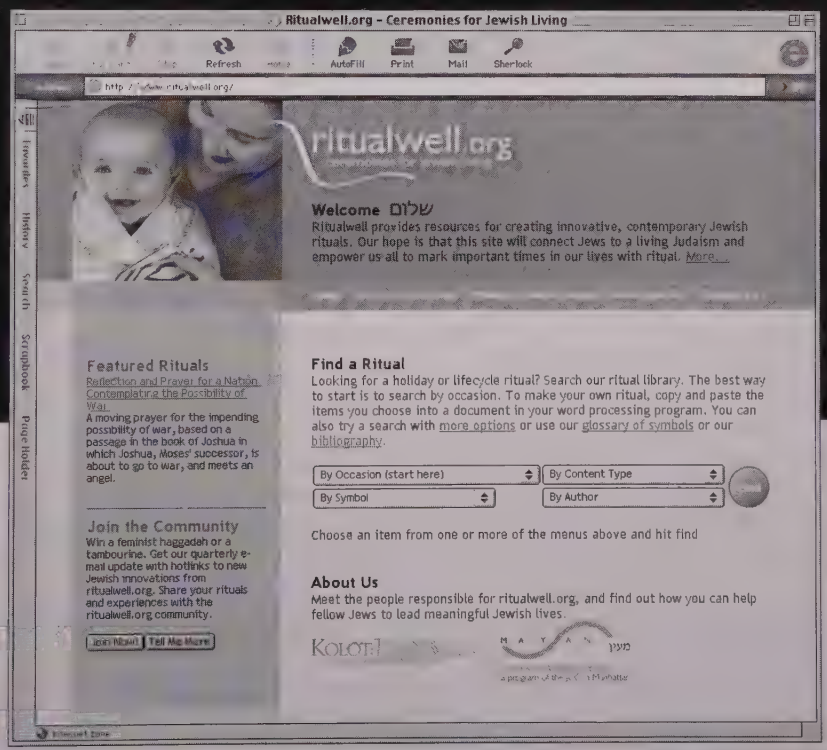
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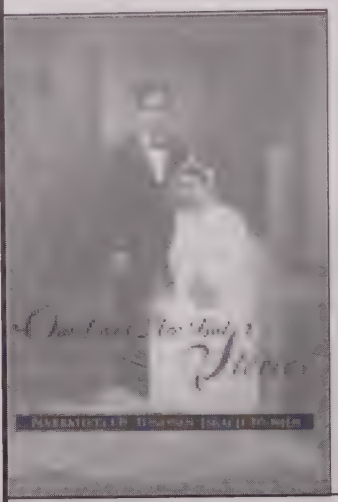
Our Lives Are But Stories

Narratives of Tunisian-Israeli Women

Esther Schely-Newman



Our Lives Are But Stories explores the crucial role of personal storytelling in the lives of a unique generation of women—Jewish women who left the Muslim country of Tunisia to settle in the newly created Israeli state. The author organized her narrators' accounts by the themes of childhood, marriage, motherhood, immigration, and old age, and considers a wide range of factors that shape the narration. The result is a fascinating blend of analysis, narration, and history.

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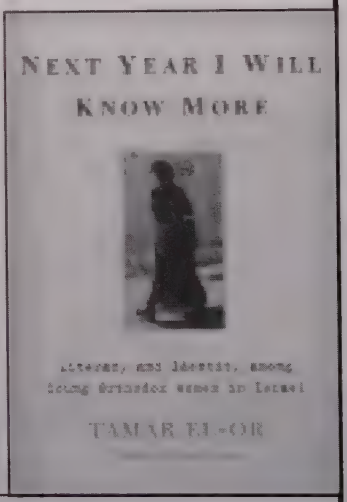

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almost monastic in their simplicity, and she is so unspoiled that she puts the rest of us cranky coupled women to shame.

In Sickness and in Health is not a "spiritual" book in the treacly, hardship-brings-wisdom genre, but rather something much less narcissistic: a tender, honest account of an ordinary husband and wife whose transparency paradoxically only serves to highlight the fundamental healing silence at the heart of intimacy, the silence that strengthens the untouchable and stands outside the exploitable world of profit and utility. Though Propp hospitably invites the reader into the gritty nuptial world of vacuum erection devices, foil pouches and grownup diapers, she also somehow simultaneously creates an unbroachable preserve for what's truly only theirs—jolting the reader into remembering that there are, indeed, places we don't belong.

The emotional curve of the book is beautifully rendered, and what emerges is a calming portrait of a very real marriage and very real losses. The biggest intimacy here, of course, is something this unassuming author doesn't even mention: that her husband, amazingly, has trusted her to tell this excruciatingly private tale, and that this trust, as the years have banked up, is something utterly deserved.

—LILITH STAFF

Holocaust: A History
By Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, W.W. Norton and Company,$27.95
Safe Among the Germans: Liberated Jews after World War II
By Ruth Gay, Yale University Press, $29.95

In their new book, *Holocaust: A History*, Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt paraphrase the post-war generation's anguish: "Each one of the Jewish victims had had neighbors. What had those neighbors done?" The question—a sincere inquiry colored rhetorical by the well-known answer—embodies the authors' approach. With a tongue as sharp as their scholarly vision, they rigorously scrutinize and never hesitate to condemn.

So we learn what the neighbors did and did not do. A grim collective resume: for the most part, the only variable was the degree of enthusiasm in the collaboration. Among the exceptions were many women, such as Rebecca van Delft, an 18-year-old Dutch courier who accompanied children by train to hiding places. Her young female identity, far from a handicap, proved a de facto job requirement, since German soldiers targeted men. We also hear from Truus Grootendorst-Vermeer, who gave up her job for full-time rescue work because "I liked my office job, but I liked the people more" and Marion van Binsbergen, who impulsively shot a Nazi to protect the children hiding in her home.

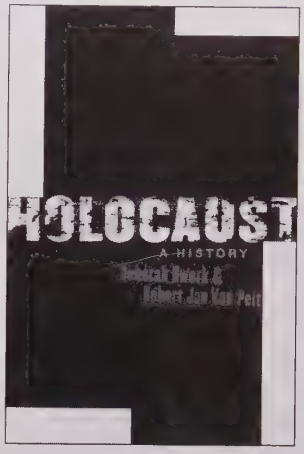
But these heroines were moral mutants. Most of the book, which justifies its ambitious title with comprehensive meticulousness, is a taxonomy of horror. There is a difference between "ethnic cleansing" and genocide, and only gradually, almost improvisatorily, did the Nazis shift from a policy of "resettlement" to the "final solution" of extermination. The authors also distinguish between incidental and deliberate slaughter: in occupied Greece, hunger resulted from Nazi pragmatism and indifference, whereas in the Soviet Union it was brandished as a genocidal weapon. Of course, these nuances made little difference to the starving.

Holocaust leaves off, essentially, where its eponymous cataclysm ends. Ruth Gay offers, in *Safe Among the Germans*, an excellent post script. Gay blazes an academic trail into post-war Germany, filling a lacuna she calls understandable: most survivors who tell their stories "stop and draw breath" at the moment of liberation, and most scholarship accordingly ends there. Now, the rich subject has finally found its author. In eloquent prose, Gay renders a portrait of a changing community that, notwithstanding internal conflict and scorn from abroad, has emerged as small but vibrant.

Two-thirds of the post-war community arrived as refugees from Eastern Europe, which had greeted its returning Jews with violence and comments like, "What, are you still alive?" Palestine and most Western countries refused the deluge of immigrants, sending many Jews to the seeming oxymoron of a safe Germany.

The United Nations' displaced persons' camps quickly established their own governments, synagogues, schools, workshops, theaters and publications. Most considered Germany a waiting room, and many did eventually emigrate to Israel or the United States. But it became increasingly clear that resettlement elsewhere might be a matter of years. Some Jews became integrated into the stabilizing German economy; some believed that a Jew-free Germany would spell victory for Hitler; some were reluctant to move yet again. Pragmatism, ideology and chance collaborated to land each refugee in a final residence. ■

— REBECCA TUHUS-DUBROW



These **heroines** were moral **mutants.**

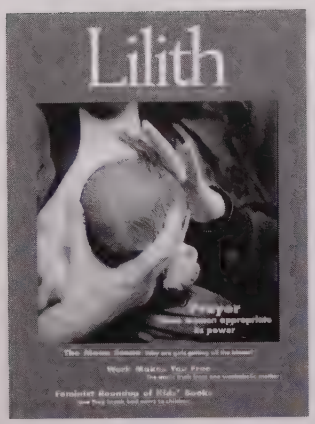
Our Reviewers:

CHARLOTTE HONIGMAN-SMITH is a writer and activist from San Francisco editing an anthology of writing by Jewish women from 'Jewish and' families.

HELEN SCHARY MOTRO, an American lawyer and writer living in Israel, is a columnist for the Jerusalem Post.

REBECCA TUHUS-DUBROW is a teacher and writer living in Brooklyn, New York.

Readers Respond



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PRAYER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE BACKFIRES

I am writing to add my two cents' worth to Rabbi Schnur's discussion about names for God ["What's this about God being female?" Fall 2002].

There is a felicitous phrase used in our liturgy which captures the androgynous nature of God, and which slips by unnoticed, for the most part: *av ha-rakhamim*, usually translated as "merciful father."

In fact, the word *rakhamim* comes from the same root that Rabbi Schnur cited, *rekhem*, which means "womb." So the *real* meaning of the phrase is **"wombful father"...an androgynous image if ever there was one!**

In its rush to render liturgical language gender-neutral, recent prayerbooks of the Reform movement have changed the Hebrew to eliminate the "father" reference, making the phrase *eyl ha-rakhamim*, "merciful God," thereby reducing the image to something quite common. While I generally endorse gender-neutral prayer language, in this case I think more is lost than is gained. "Wombful father" tells us a lot about the God to whom we pray, [and] to whom we turn in times of tsuris.

RABBI CARLA FREEDMAN
SOUTH SALEM, NY

LILITH IN CHINA

From Hong Kong, I asked if you could send a clean copy of an article I was hoping to use in a Rosh Hodesh group I facilitated. I had the article but it was tattered beyond legibility. You graciously sent me a new copy as well as several cards discussing [a new Passover ritual using] Miriam's Cup. I thank you very much for that. **The Jewish women of Hong Kong** also thank you as it added greatly to our understanding and our seders.

STACEY GUTHARTZ
BY E-MAIL

GIFTS FOR GROWNUPS

I just have to write to you. I picked up a copy of your magazine in my bookstore today and have just read [about] bat mitzvah presents [Editorial, Summer 2002] and cannot go further without telling you how you have touched a real issue for me. What is it about the way we bring girls up that they are unable to either say what they would really like or even imagine [it]? I am blessed with a loving family, I am heavily into embroidery and other craft works and very active in my community. But **what do I get for presents?** Bath stuff, etc. (Perhaps I smell and don't realize it!) Oh for a book to feed the soul or a wonderful piece of fabric to excite the senses or a packet of needles or some beads, a staple gun or set squares!

BRENDA FREEDMAN
BY E-MAIL

EVEN OUT THE FIELD

I was moved to write by your editorial on the different messages people send through their bar and bat mitzvah gifts [Summer 2002]. I have been disturbed for some time by rampant sexism in the treatment my teenage sons and daughters receive from our temple congregation. It's not so much **what people give my daughters** as what they do *not* give them.

One son and two daughters are away at school. My son will have his religious school materials mailed to him monthly so he can be complete his studies because, it was explained to him, if he doesn't complete his religious school lessons he will not be eligible for temple-financed trips and scholarships. My daughters will not receive such mailings. When I asked, I was told that this offer was available only to my son. No mention was ever made to me about the fact that my daughters will subsequently be disqualified for many benefits available to temple youth members.

It's time women organized to provide mentoring and support for our daughters and invite them to participate in adult female activities. We need to use our new positions of influence and power to help young women in the way [older] men help young men.

Let's even the playing field for the girls.

JOYE R. SWAIN
BY E-MAIL

MEAN GIRLS, REDUX

Girls have probably always had a tendency towards "meanness" ["The Mean Scene," Fall 2002]. As the Victorians were shocked that women were capable of murder and other horrific behavior, the societal denial of all extremes of feminine "norms" didn't penetrate the credibility. Maybe **not all girls are "sugar and spice and everything nice"** all of the time.

DIANA SWAN
PORTLAND, OREGON

P.S. Incidentally, this is only the second issue of LILITH I've read. Thanks for the insight! I've been "shopping" for a women's magazine that speaks to/for me.

DAUGHTERS OF THE RED TENT

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Documenting Lives

Through our Eyes: Art, Artifacts, Photographs and Holograms from the Museums of London, Frankfurt and Vienna includes a first time US exhibit for and a tribute to the work of photographer. Juliette Soester (1934–2002). Soester, whose father was Jewish, felt strongly drawn to her Jewish background, reinforced by the knowledge that so many of her father's family had perished in the Holocaust. She converted to Judaism and went to Israel at the time of the 1956 Suez Campaign. Her fascination with Jewish life from Eastern Europe to England resulted in a collection of over 2000 photographs many of which have been used as illustrations in Jewish textbooks. This exhibit was coordinated by Soester's cousin Abbe Slavin; curators are Carol Siegel of the London

"J. Spielsinger" Baker and Confectioner by Juliette Soester

Jewish Museum and Feliciatas Heimann-Jelinek of the Jewish Museum of Vienna. Through May 19, 2003 at the St. Petersburg *Florida Holocaust Museum (727)820-0100 /(800)960-7448 (toll-free) www.flholocaustmuseum.org*

Jewish documentary films including scenes from pre-Holocaust European Jewish communities, early pioneering

Still from "The Land of Promise" 1935 (courtesy Spielberg Film Archive)

efforts in the land of Israel, and proceedings from the Adolf Eichmann trial are among over one hundred of an anticipated 500 films that are viewable on line (but not copiable) from the the *Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. www.spielbergfilmarchive.org.il*

The Partition Is in Place But the Service Can't Begin is an installation/documentation by artist Heléne Aylon addressing the ancient disregard of women as equals in prayer. Dedicated to the Women of the Wall in Jerusalem, the work includes a 21-foot *mehitza* (partition) made of *tzitziot* (fringes) and three images of the Western Wall in different lights for the three times of daily prayer. On view through April 21 at the *Philadelphia Jewish Museum of Art, Congregation Rodeph Shalom, (215)627-6747.*

Are you a graduate student with a special interest in the lives, work, and culture of Jewish women as demonstrated by your research, thesis or dissertation topic or a project? The Jewish Caucus of the National Women's Studies Association will award a prize of $1000 to a graduate student who is enrolled full-time for the 2003 academic year. The deadline for completed applications is March 1, 2003. Contact *Connie Koppelman, ckoppelman@notes.cc.sunysb.edu*

Shoah

The Federation of Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, just formed, will link groups and individuals with resources on issues that concern descendants of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Organizers would like to know your specific areas of interest and expertise: Long term health care for aging parents? Political action? Restitution & reparations? Memoir writing? The new federation will work in cooperation with other Holocaust survivor groups and Jewish organizations and is looking to contact descendants of Jewish Holocaust survivors around the world. *Contact Allgenerations@aol.com*

Hidden Children who would be interested in participating in an e-mail forum on topics of mutual concern are invited to contact Amsterdam resident *Frederik van Gelder, fvangelder@hotmail.com*

Food

Wheat, Grapes and Olives Describing the holiday Jews get to celebrate 52 times a year, Beth Uval says "Anywhere in the world, the essential features of the Sabbath table are the same—*hallah,* the special Sabbath bread; wine or grape juice, and lights, today usually candles. The bread, wine and lights (originally olive oil lamps) are direct links to the three main crops of ancient Israel, wheat grapes and olives….the trio that through the Bible, represent divine response to human needs." Recreated Biblical recipes are also included in the summer/ fall issue of the newsletter of American Friends of Neot Kedumim, The Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel. *www.neot-kedumim.org.il*

Foods as Roots. Check out a series of cooking classes offered by the leadership forum of YIVO Institute. You can join in a cooking demonstration of holiday desserts by Nicole Kaplan on January 30, or hallah baking with Katja Goldman on Feburary 27. The $300 fee per session goes to support education programs on Yiddish culture. *Contact Ella Levine at YIVO (212)294-6128.*

Domestic Violence

The Vagina Monologues. a one night benefit performance featuring New York Jewish women will be happening on February 12th 2003 at 7:30 pm at Town Hall. It's part of V-Day 2003, a worldwide campaign that raises money and awareness to stop violence against women and girls. Women's Division of UJA Federation will host this event, which will be attended by Eve Ensler, creator of the show. In star-for-a-night roles will be a selection of New York Jewish women active in UJA, among others, Frances Brandt, Shifra Bronznick, Barbara Dobkin; Ruth Perelson, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Marlene Post and Audrey Weiner. Agencies with major domestic violence programs in New York and Jerusalem have been selected to receive

profits from the evening's performance. *(212)836-1554; Rabbi Lori Forman, formanl@ujafedny.org*

Rabbis are in a key position to break the silence around abuse in Jewish homes and to identify ways of creating Jewish responses to the issue. "When word gets out that there is a rabbi who both believes that the problem exists and is inclined and helpful, abused women will be much more likely to come forward and seek help," writes Rabbi Gerald Skolnik in *Embracing Justice: A Resource Guide for Rabbis on Domestic Abuse*, a 168-page anthology edited by Diane Gardsbane published by *Jewish Women International (800)343-2823; www.jewishwomen.org*

Arts Collections

Bubbe's music sings again At Florida Atlantic University, volunteers have been lovingly cleaning and digitally re-recording about 1000 vintage records in an effort to save the sounds of the synagogues, the shtetls of Eastern Europe,

the Djuderias of Spain, and the teeming early twentieth century Jewish neighborhoods of the great American cities, preserving everything from the chants of great cantors to the lively tunes of klezmer bands, grandmothers' lullabies, songs from the Yiddish stage and Sephardic weddings to allow future generations to gain first-hand knowledge of the music their grandparents and great-grandparents loved as children. The Molly S. Fraiberg Judaica Collections at Florida Atlantic University is open to visitors on an appointment basis. To donate Hebrew, Yiddish or Sephardic records, or other artifacts of Jewish culture or to schedule a visit, *(561)297-3787; Jewishmusic@fau.edu*

The Jewish Clipart Database is a new feature on The J Site —Jewish Education and Entertainment—website created by Jacob Richman. This database will be a collection of Jewish Clipart for noncommercial use by the community. Graphic artists and illustrators from all over the world are invited to donate clipart to the database and share in the publicity that the donation will bring. When a user views your Jewish clipart, your name will appear beside it. By clicking on your name, a pop-up box will be displayed with your contact information. *www.J.co.il*

Write

A Bay Area Celebration of Jewish Women's Poetry is happening on March 30, 2003. Grace Paley will be keynote speaker and Chana Bloch, Marcia Falk, and Yiskah Rosenfeld, among others will offer poetry readings and writing workshops. There will be music by Jewish women, an open mic, a book fair, and a poetry slam by young poets. This event is co-sponsored by several local synagogues and organizations and Lilith magazine. At the *Berkeley Richmond JCC, contact Ruth Phillips (510)848-0237x127; Ruthp@brjcc.org*

Help tell the story of two Jewish girls who grew up in Alexandria Diana Muir, a historian, is looking for writers to tell the girls' story. She anticipates a series of books that will tell stories about the conditions and timing of flight by Jewish refugees from Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Algeria and Tunisia. For more information, contact *DianaMuir@aol.com*

Make Waves. A Media Directory 2002-2003 enables you to contact TV and radio stations, newspapers and magazines to convey to them that you are alert to inaccurate, skewed or incomplete reporting on news about Israel and the Middle East. *CAMERA (Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) (617)789-3672; www.camera.org*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

Help Israel

Communities holding Israeli Fairs and people who want to attend one can visit a website to list details about their fairs, find out about fairs in their area, link to Israeli merchant and artist websites, give gifts to Israeli soldiers and terror victims and make donations to non-profit agencies helping Israel. Also, the organizers urge, this week and every week, buy something from Israel. The site founders are Audrey Brooks Cownie and Alan Stein *www.israelfairs.org*

Buy Fine Foods from Israel a web-based consumer guide to help American shoppers identify local supermarkets and grocery stores that sell Israeli foods needs your help. Let them know about stores in your area that sell Israeli foods. Please e-mail the name and full address of each store to Lily Zagorsky at the Israel Economic Mission. *lilyz@emus.gov.il; http://www.finefoodsisrael.com*

Send English language books to Israeli school children. Learn from Rena Cohen how she organized a Greater Washington DC drive to send English-language books, new or gently used, to Israeli schools suffering budget cuts. They're also interested in hearing from principals and teachers who would like to correspond with Israeli colleagues as well as have their students participate in web-based discussions in English with Israeli students. *IsraelActionMDSC@hotmail.com*

Unusual Ways to Help

Fund Free mammograms. The Breast Cancer website needs people to click on it daily to meet their quota of donating at least one free mammogram a day to an underprivileged women. Go to their site and click on "Fund Free Mammograms" (pink window in the middle). *www.thebreastcancersite.com/*

Donate your very long hair to a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children under age 18 across the U.S. suffering from long-term medical hair loss. The prostheses help to restore their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers. *www.locksoflove.org*

The Outsider

being a Catholic in temple

My daughter stared at her reflection as she brushed her teeth. Our eyes met in the mirror as she said, "Mama, I'm sad that you're different from us."

My heart sank.

"We all have brown eyes and yours are blue. Don't you wish you had brown eyes too?" My heart lightened. I had thought Claire was going to ask me about my being the only Catholic in our interfaith household.

Before my wedding, mother worried about how I would feel if I married a Jewish man and raised Jewish children, and asked if I'd considered converting. I assured my mother that having a different religion or a different last name (I was keeping my maiden name, another source of concern for her) did not mean I had to feel like an outsider in my own family. At 31 I had a strong sense of who I was and what I wanted. My fiancé and I had attended an interfaith couples group and discussed likely scenarios for birth rituals, raising children, celebrating holidays, and we agreed that the interfaith aspects of our household would be open to reinterpretation as our lives changed. I had tried to think through all the challenges.

It was my idea to raise any future children Jewish. Even though I was no longer attending Mass regularly, I knew I wanted to raise a family that participated together in a religious community. In addition, I was comfortable in synagogues, while Barry was decidedly uncomfortable in churches. So, if I wanted Barry to participate in our children's religious upbringing, the only thing that made sense was to raise them Jewish. If I felt like an outsider at services, I could handle that. I would experience what it feels like to be the minority. Wasn't that what Jews experience all too often?

And so we married. We had children. We joined a Reform temple. And…I felt like an outsider. But, my mother was only half right. I didn't feel like an outsider in my family; I felt like an outsider in my foster religious congregation.

Language was one factor that created distance for me. Even though most prayers are translated into English in our Reform services, some sections are recited in Hebrew. I stand silent at those times. I also tend to keep quiet when salutations are exchanged. But I am learning. Rosh Hashanah does not elicit a hearty "Happy New Year!" but instead "L'Shana Tova." However, neither this phrase nor "Shabbat Shalom"—a standard Friday night greeting—roll off my tongue easily quite yet. And with a name like "McMahon," I'm pretty sure none of my ancestors were brought out of bondage from Egypt.

Ah, my name; perhaps mom was right about that, too. There is nothing Jewish about "Teresa" or "McMahon." Whenever I call the temple to sign up for a class or inquire about High Holiday tickets, I always feel the need to add that I'm the wife of Barry and mother to Claire and Emily Fishman. I feel like I'm a member only as their guest. Which in some ways is true, since I haven't converted.

Don't get me wrong, I feel welcome at my temple, which has a number of interfaith families. I even like how aware of praying I am, since so much of what we do in a service is new enough to require my full attention. Still, I feel like an in-law rather than one of the family. After several years, I wasn't sure that even conversion, if I were to choose it, would make me feel more like an "insider." I didn't share a cultural history, personal or ancestral, with members.

Then I shared, with the rest of the world, the tragic events of September 11, 2001. For the first time in my life, I turned to religion not for a joyous occasion, but for comfort in grief. I considered going to Mass, but I hadn't attended a Catholic church in the area since we'd joined the temple. I wanted to be with my family, and, as we attended services, I did find great comfort in our being together. But I also found comfort in Hebrew that had become more familiar than I'd realized, in the rabbi's sermon, in realizing that my connection with the congregation had strengthened over the years without my even realizing it…in finally feeling like a member of the community.

But what was my tie to the bigger Jewish community? After the birth of each of my daughters my imagination had run wild. Not only did table edges seem sharper and stairs more dangerous, but I would look at the congregation during services and wonder what would have happened to us if we had existed during a Russian pogrom or in Nazi Germany. Would I have "protected" my daughters with my Christianity? Would I have denounced Judaism? I used to wonder how I would have responded, naively thinking that this hatred was a thing of the past. Sadly it is not.

A year has passed. A year of media reports on terrorism and the Israeli/Palestinian situation and on increased anti-Semitism the world over. Is the anti-Semitic cycle starting up again? I no longer have the luxury of looking in on the situation from the outside. I choose to stand with my daughters and my husband on the inside. ■

TERESA A. MCMAHON, PH.D., is an educational researcher and freelance writer in Ann Arbor Michigan.